

Jewish law adapts to new situations, says rabbi

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Rabbi Frydman-Kohl told *The CJN* at the time that the community "should not misunderstand the justifiable inclusion of women for Torah honours with the abandonment of rabbinic law or gender distinctiveness."

However, he said last week, Jewish law changes and adapts to new situations. The new policy is "not an abandonment of Jewish law, rather it's an affirmation of it."

The issue of counting women in a minyan is "much more complex halachically" than the Torah honours he wrote about 17 years ago, the rabbi added.

At the time, he said, he didn't find all of the arguments he had read in favour of counting women in the minyan "sufficiently cogent." But in the past three years, he's read other sources "that I believed had significant halachic cogency."

Among them, he said, were writings by Conservative halachic authority Rabbi David Golinkin and Orthodox Rabbi Michael Chernick. Arguments by Rabbi Chernick, which are not cited in the tshuvah, were not related to public prayer per se, but rather to the potential for women's holiness.

Rabbi Frydman-Kohl's tshuvah explains that women have a personal responsibility for daily prayer, despite the mishnaic exemption from time-dependent mitzvot.

As well, he notes that "the dignity of the congregation" – often cited as a reason for limitations on women's participation – is a "fluid concept, reflecting cultural context."

Rabbi Frydman-Kohl said he was surprised to receive e-mails from people all over Canada in response to the

tshuvah. "I would say by and large women have written me to tell me that the idea of personal dignity resonates for them... I haven't received any significant negative reaction."

He plans to provide study opportunities for the congregation on this issue after he returns from his sabbatical in May.

Kahn said there has not been a need for women to be counted in the minyan, from a numbers standpoint. For at least the past year, he said, there hasn't been a shortage of men to be counted toward a minyan.

He said the reaction from the congregation has been "overwhelmingly positive," although he knew of one person who didn't agree with the tshuvah.

Kahn said the new policy refers only to women counting in the minyan. "We're not expanding the role of women as prayer leaders or changing the fact they can't have the first two aliyot."

Toward the end of the 29-page tshuvah, Rabbi Frydman-Kohl wrote, "In our time, when many social barriers have shifted and women are involved in all areas of public life, their personal dignity (*kavod habriyot*) is impinged upon when they are marginalized within the spiritual life of their religious community... In a time when women are socially, politically and culturally integrated with and equal to men, an unjustified gap between genders in synagogue life can bring about a denigration of Torah and a desecration of the Divine name."

Teens to participate in day of service

Compiled by CJN Staff

More than 500 Toronto-area teens, along with 10,000 Jewish teens from across North America, Europe and Israel, will participate in a day of community service next month.

Volunteers for J-Serve Toronto: the Global Day of Jewish Youth Service will meet at Adath Israel Congregation at 11:30 a.m. on April 10. At 12:30 p.m., they will depart to service sites, with transportation provided by chartered buses, and at 4:30 p.m., they return to Adath Israel for a wrap-up.

This year marks the second year in which Toronto-area teens will participate in the international initiative, thanks to funding by UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and the PANIM Institute of BBYO.

"Teens are directed to register at Jserve.ca, where they will be asked to choose a project from among several service opportunities," said Kevin Goodman, program director at BBYO.

J-Serve Toronto's service options include cleaning for Passover at Ansei Minsk Synagogue; visiting with patients at Baycrest; taking part in youth-led environmental workshops hosted by Bayview Cor-

ridor Synagogues; selling pins for the Canadian Cancer Society's annual Daffodil Month; assisting residents of Habayit Shelanu with gardening through Circle of Care; spearheading a transformative cleanup of Earl Bales Park; hosting a party for residents at long-term care home Cummer Lodge; joining DANI (which helps young adults with physical and/or cognitive challenges) participants for fun and treats; taking part in a series of workshops with Free the Children; canvassing to promote UJA Federation's annual Walk with Israel; assembling education kits with Ve'ahavta, the Canadian Jewish Humanitarian & Relief Committee, to be sent to Israeli families in need, and working the phones at the Zareinu Educational Centre telethon to promote its 14th annual Moveathon.

J-Serve Toronto coincides with the kickoff of Volunteer Canada's National Volunteer Week, our country's largest celebration of volunteers, volunteerism and civic participation.

For more information about J-Serve Toronto, visit www.jserve.ca or contact Kerry Bernknopf, project co-ordinator, at 416-398-2004, ext. 223, or kberknopf@bbyo.ca.

Reena in the News



The Board of Directors, Clients,
Families and Staff of Reena,
Batay Reena and Reena Foundation
wish all our friends and supporters a

Happy and Kosher Pesach

as you celebrate with your family and friends.

Celebrating Passover at Reena.

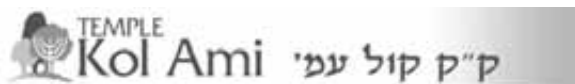
As we gear up to celebrate the beautiful holiday of Passover, commemorating the exodus of the Jewish nation from Egypt to Israel, we immerse ourselves in plans and preparations. To assist our group homes in this tremendous effort, Reena publishes a Practical Passover Planner every year, guiding staff and the people with developmental disabilities that they support to successfully schedule and complete all of the many tasks involved in an organized and unhurried manner. Each Reena home enjoys a "Kosher for Passover" cookbook put together by the Faith & Culture Department. In order to enjoy and experience the seder, the festive meal re-enacting the exodus, each Reena group home has a number of Reena Passover *Haggadahs* especially prepared for their use.

Some people with developmental disabilities involved in Reena will be going to their family home for the *seders*. For those individuals not going home, many group homes will be holding their own *seder*.

If you have not yet completed your plans for Pesach *seders* and want to perform an important mitzvah, please consider leading a *seder* at a Reena group home or invite a person(s) with a developmental disability to be a guest at your family seder on either Monday night, April 18th or Tuesday night, April 19th.

Please call Arlene Margolese at 905-889-3372.

www.reena.org



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**Wishing you peace,
good health,
and happiness
on Passover**

Eric Hoskins