

TBZ WOMEN'S RETREAT

On February 12, close to 60 TBZ women joined together for a day of learning and friendship on the 1st TBZ Women's Retreat.

We would like to give special thanks to:

our presenters: Diane Balser, Debbie Cohen, Joyce Friedman, Lauren Garlick, Bobbi Isberg, Yocheved Katz, Rav Claudia Kreiman, Pnina Lahav, Judith Rosenbaum, and Barbara Sternfield.

our retreat Planning Committee: Diane Balser, Lauren Garlick, Suzanne Gelber, Rachel Kalet, Pnina Lahav, Enid Shulman, Beth Silverberg Marx, and Barbara Sternfield.

The program sessions included:

Cultivating Receptivity- a Yoga workshop with Debbie Cohen

Engaging- Finding Meaning from Your Life Experience with Barbara Sternfield

Banishing Israeli Women from the Public Square with Pnina Lahav

Meeting our Matriarchs: dynamic, interactive and personal encounters with Lauren Garlick

Bread and Roses: Jewish women and labor activism with Judith Rosenbaum

A Performance: FINDING MIRIAM with Joyce Friedman

Intimacy through Meditation and Torah with Bobbi Isberg & Yocheved Katz

Tallit, Kippah and Tfilin: Women and "male" Jewish Ritual with Rav Claudia

How to tie your own tzitzit with Rav Claudia

Religious & Secular Feminism with Diane Balser

A few reflections from participants:

From Diane Balser:

The recent women's retreat was one of the most exciting gatherings that I have participated in at Temple Beth Zion. As we celebrated Jewish female models of the past and present, we strengthened our growing sense of community among the women at TBZ. We explored critical issues that pertain to us as Jewish women, such as:

- what is the real meaning of egalitarianism in community practice, philosophy and religious observance?
- how can we support women in Israel who are facing the growing deterioration of their rights as women?
- how do we involve and partner with men on an equal basis in all aspects of Jewish life?

For many of us the retreat allowed us to bring a feminist lens to our TBZ community. I deeply appreciate the leadership of Rav Claudia, who is pioneering a new model of a woman Rabbi. And I thank the number of women in TBZ who care so passionately about our community and who lead and contribute to one of the most profound changes in Jewish life in the modern/contemporary era.

From Anne Braudy:

The TBZ Women's Retreat was a deep and rich day for the almost 60 of us who joined together. What a treasure trove day I experienced, from *davening* together to yoga in the sanctuary to watching a group of our women donning *Tefillin*.

A true highlight was Lauren Garlick's workshop on Meeting our Matriarchs, where we looked at Sarah, studying in *hevruta* and using text to create human sculpture with our bodies to portray our take on one of the episodes in her life. It was such a powerful, fun, creative, multi-layered way to study Torah – and strikingly, there were many interpretations of Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham. Interestingly, we started the workshop offering words to describe Matriarch – almost all very positive. Yet at the end of the workshop, we had portrayed Sarah as a much more nuanced, flawed woman; so how, I wonder, would we have redefined the word Matriarch after this workshop? What happened at lunch was even more magical, as my table continued the conversation, probing all the different ways that each of our duos in the workshop had interpreted Sarah, Hagar, and the whole 'extended family'. We were having our own Torah study over lunch and each of us was so engaged and excited by the conversation – it took us into other deep questions of faith, too. A wonderful broad and deep luncheon conversation.

Thank you to all who made this Retreat so remarkable!

From Rachel Kalet:

Our most amazing 1st TBZ's Women's Retreat happened on February 12, 2012. The joyous celebration began early for me as I volunteered on the Breakfast/Nosh Committee. As Ann Waldoks says, "When you become involved by participating in some type of "kitchen" activity you really get to know our TBZ family!"

It all happens in the kitchen! The coffee begins brewing, and I know this is going to be a delicious day! As our friends walk into the community room, I love seeing their fresh faces in the morning with smiles and enthusiasm. Rav Claudia walks into the kitchen to ensure everything is okay, and we tell her, "We have it under control!"

Our focus is to learn about Judaism, our relationships within TBZ and to experience our own spirituality. As we begin our *Shacharit* prayers, Hebrew flows from our lips. The *Shekinah* welcomes us. I am empowered by seeing women wear *Tallis*, *Kippa*, and *Tefillin*. I attended the workshop with Pnina Lahav on "Banishing Israeli Women from the Public Square" – Amazing! I am strengthened by being in the presence of such incredible TBZ women. My second workshop: "Meeting our Matriarchs: Dynamic, Interactive and Personal Encounters" begins with Lauren Garlick introducing us to the stories of Sarah, Abraham, and Hagar. We join in small groups discussing Sarah and forming a drama skit with our own *Midrash*. The story lifts off the page, and I cannot imagine for myself Sarah sending Abraham to make a child with Hagar. "No way, Never!"

My life has changed since the retreat. I am connecting more deeply with *HaShem* in my *Shacharit* prayers. The impression of *HaShem* on my soul has deepened like a beautiful Monet water lily painting. All of the women at TBZ are with me – each of us – unique - forming this impressionistic painting. Thank you TBZ for this masterpiece that we are creating as a community!