SCHOLARSHIP ABOUNDS

Jewish Feminist Scholarship" (Winter 1990) by Vanessa Ochs was very welcome indeed.

LILITH's readers should know that even though the impression is given that scant materials existed "even ten years ago," Biblio Press' Jewish Women Studies Guide by Elwell and Levenson (first edition, 1983) contained curriculum guides by some of the scholars mentioned in LILITH's article; the second edition of 1987, co-published by the University Press of America, is now widely used.

Also, the first edition of Aviva Cantor's Jewish Woman Bibliography, 1900-1980, which was published in 1979, has a variety of dissertation papers and conference proceedings as well as historical references.

Doris Gold
New York City

VOLUNTEERING IN ISRAEL

After years of missions, speeches, countless checks, exhortations, letters and visits with dear friends and colleagues, it was Volunteers for Israel (mentioned in "Tsena Rena," Summer 1989) that made me a "real" kind of partner with my Israeli counterparts.

Known by its acronym, SAR-EL, the Volunteers for Israel was founded by a former paratrooper, General Aharon Davidi, right after the invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Each year since then, approximately 3,000 persons aged 18 to 80 have come from all over North America, England and France to volunteer.

As a mitnadevet (volunteer), one travels to Israel cheaply and is sent to an army base or city where one is housed and fed during a three-week work assignment. Volunteers replace reservists who would otherwise have to take time from their normal family and work lives. The jobs vary according to placement and needs: one may assist in repacking parachutes, cleaning tank parts, or sorting optical equipment. Volunteers are offered home hospitality over Shabbat with Israeli families. SAR-EL takes the group on weekly sight-seeing excursions. There are optional Hebrew lessons, lots of singing, informal lectures, shmoozing and good fun.

An American woman volunteer receives more respect from Israelis in all walks of life for three weeks volunteer service to the country than any other kind of participation, short of making aliya!

Raquel Newman
San Francisco CA

CREATING RESPECT FOR BIRTHING WOMEN

In her article, "Instructions for the Birthing Team" (Winter 1990), Shirley Stanger pleads for greater respect and empathy towards "couples with different lifestyles."

To expect modern hospital personnel to go along with and endorse such completely illogical and essentially rejecting gestures towards women in labor as the practice of niddah — so that a woman cannot be touched by her husband "during any type of uterine bleeding" — falls under the heading of unrealistic expectations, to say the least.

If the ultra-Orthodox are put off by the hospital personnel's understandable coolness towards these irrational concepts, they should be delivered at home by an Orthodox midwife who will comply with these considerations.

Gretel Bleich Rubin
Rye NY

THANKS TO LILITH

I enjoyed LILITH Fall 1989 and Winter 1990 more than I could have imagined I would. My own relationship to my Jewish heritage has been cautious. But the diversity, honesty, ingenuity and passion of the work collected in these two issues impressed and moved me. Even your advertising is provocative and suggests to me, as a new reader, a world of Jewish feminism I deeply gratified to know of.

Joy A. Tomchin
New York City

HAVING JUST READ LILITH FOR THE FIRST TIME YESTERDAY, I FELT VALIDATED. I WALKED OUT ON JUDAISM AT AGE 15. I WANTED TO BE A RABBI AND WAS TOLD THAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE. I WANTED TO SING IN THE SHUL CHOIR AND WAS TOLD THAT A YOUNG GIRL SHOULDN'T GO OUT ON DATES ON FRIDAY NIGHTS.

Although I consider myself a citizen of the universe, an acknowledge of all true paths and sages, still I know I am Jewish, if only by infection. The childhood memories and values have served me well. I am happy to see that some of my sisters stayed to live the dreams I dreamed.

I am certain that my growing philosophic life has caused me to get in touch with the human and finite and the eternal and infinite from my past. I light yahrzeit candles for my parents. This year I will light Chanukah candles to honor the struggle within to keep the flame of love of God burning.

Karen Timmons
Forestville CA

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