Dear Friends,

This Newsletter is primarily devoted to the ideas that we will be exploring at ICJW’s Herczeg Jerusalem Seminar for Jewish Education in May, which is entitled “Time and Place: Profound Philosophical Concepts in Jewish Thought”.

These concepts are basic to understanding the Jewish perspective on many aspects of Jewish philosophy and practice, and this Seminar will provide the participants with a time and place to immerse themselves in learning more about them. These keys will also help stretch our minds and expand our knowledge—fulfilling the goals and purposes of the Seminar since its inception.

While learning is a matter for personal growth, the opportunity we have at the Seminar to participate in a collective study experience is what makes it one of the major events in the ICJW calendar. We have every reason to expect that this Seminar will be among the best. I would like to thank all who have played a part in organizing the Herczeg Jerusalem Seminar and, above all, Rena Cohen, who suggested the topic and has invested much effort to translate it into an actual program.

As we approach the holiday of Pesach and the sense of renewal it brings, may what we learn at the Seminar be a catalyst for personal enrichment and a collective blossoming—in all respects.

Looking forward to meeting you in Jerusalem,

Leah Aharonov
President, ICJW

Concepts of Time and Place in Jewish Thought

Where are you now? What time is it? When and where shall we meet? How much time do we have? These are some of the very basic questions that we ask and are asked daily, because dealing with time and place is an integral part of our lives. Without understanding these concepts, our lives would be difficult to manage.

*Time* and *place* are two structural and necessary dimensions that direct and shape our lives. Every culture defines and adapts them in order to shape its character.

Jewish culture is based on a perception of the consequences of both time and place, which gives Judaism its

(continued on page 2)
character, its color, and its special essences. Judaism uses the term “holiness” to mold time and place together in order to make it possible for a person to conduct his/her life within clear parameters of time and place.

There is a common understanding that, when all the different dimensions are taken into consideration, such as measurement, weight, and physical laws known to exist in or around us, time is the only one we have been unable to change, twist, or even understand. Time actually has two dimensions. There is physical, chronological, clock time, which is set and measured. But we know that there is also subjective time, in which no single hour feels the same as the previous one, when every day is different, and a week can stand still or fly by in “no time”.

Throughout history prominent Jewish philosophers have made references to time as a central pillar in Jewish life. Abraham Joshua Heschel, for example, determined that, “Judaism is a religion that defines time as holy.” Franz Rosenzweig states, “A Jew has his own awareness of time – a consciousness of time discovered, time longing for redemption”; meaning, time that has passed, mingled with the present, and yearning for the future. That is to say, Judaism has freed itself from the concept of time as cyclical and converts it into historic linear time.

The twentieth-century French philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson formulated a new theory of time – time as a continuum. He talked about passing, flowing, and measurable time. He viewed time as multidimensional in which past, present, and future are intertwined and become the strongest characteristic of Jewish time.

The Torah, in the story of Creation, counts the days and points out the differences between one day and the next. Each day stands alone, but, when joined together, they produce the Six Days of Creation. With the addition of the seventh day, bequeathed by the Jews to all cultures and nations as a day of rest, we now have a week. This is the basic time segment. All cultures accept that a week is made up of seven days.

What is the seventh day in the Jewish tradition? What makes it stand out from other days? Who set the day? What is the basis of the agreement to recognize a seven-day week? Judaism, with its strong historic awareness, connects major past events, such as the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, to the here and now by means of sanctification of those events.

Judaism relies on the Hebrew calendar and marks months, festivals, and holidays. These special days are the backbone of contemporary Jewish culture. It seems that there is no other aspect of Jewish life with such a wide consensus among the various streams of Judaism. This is the glue that holds the people of Israel together. To mark these holidays and festivals, we say, “Mekadesh Israel VehaZmanim”, reminding
ourselves of past events like the Exodus and Mount Sinai, in order to strengthen the link between the past, present, and future.

The idea of place is also formulated through the concept of “holiness”. There are four references to holiness of a place that are recognized in Judaism:  
1. The sanctity of the Land of Israel;  
2. Within Israel, the sanctity of Jerusalem;  
3. Within the Holy City of Jerusalem, the Temple;  
4. The “Holy of Holies” within the Temple, into which the High Priest is allowed to enter only on Yom Kippur.

A “holy place” requires special actions and activities in order to identify it as such and establish the proper behavior suitable to its environs. For example, there are basic laws and commandments that are incumbent only on those who have chosen their place to live in the Land of Israel.

Throughout Jewish history the creative mind of the Jewish people developed, discussed, clarified, and outlined new paths for Jewish conduct in time and place. The Bible, Mishnah, Talmud, and contemporary philosophers have grappled and continue to grapple with these questions.

These basic philosophical concepts of time and place will be the topic of the upcoming ICJW Herczeg Jerusalem Seminar for Jewish Education to be held in Jerusalem at Kibbutz Ramat Rachel, May 17-20, 2009. We hope that you will find the time to participate in the Seminar, and that you will come to a place that will offer you an interesting, exciting, challenging Jewish educational experience.

Rena Cohen, Co-Chairperson,  
ICJW Herczeg Jerusalem Seminar for Jewish Education

### A Socio-Historical Perspective

The questions of time and place that will be the focus of the upcoming ICJW Herczeg Jerusalem Seminar for Jewish Education are fundamental to the construction of a coherent ego identity.

The Emancipation of the Jews and the demise of feudalism in modern Europe created opportunities for the acceptance of Jews as equals in the majority culture, but, at the same time, posed an existential dilemma. The Jews devised a variety of ways to benefit from their new economic, social, and cultural equality, while attempting to retain the particularistic features of their Jewish identity. This new situation completely changed the Jews’ conception of time and place. The Jews were able to leave the ghettos and cross borders. While Jews lived in a non-historic time perspective until the Renaissance, the establishment of the Zionist movement meant that the Jews could now become part of normative human history.

The Jewish nation began to function like all other "normal" nations in Western civilization. This process of normalization affected Jewish women in particular, as the new era changed the traditional sphere allocation. Jewish women were able to function equally in the public sphere, maneuvering time and space according to their convenience and inclinations. Globalization has further intensified the processes of women’s liberation and changed the notion of space and time. The post-modern individual can simultaneously be here and there and in a real or a virtual time and place. This has altered tremendously the frames of reference of Jewish women.

Women are more liberated today, yet are sometimes doomed to loneliness due to their emancipation from the embrace of the collective and of social control. The International Council of Jewish Women confronts these challenges and serves as an outstanding international venue in which these fundamental existential questions are discussed within a learning community of shared Jewish commitment. Many of the points raised here will undoubtedly be the subjects of more in-depth study at the ICJW Seminar.

Dr. Zehavit Gross is a senior lecturer and head of the graduate program of social education at the School of Education, Bar-Ilan University, and is the Co-Chairperson of the ICJW Jewish Education Committee.
As the holiest place to Jews all over the world, Jerusalem is the place where many of the dramas of Jewish history have been played out. As one wanders its ancient streets, one feels the weight of 2000 years of hopes and dreams, and finds traces of some of the special women who left their mark in Jerusalem. Judy Telman invites us to walk with her into the past to meet four women of Jerusalem who left their mark on the city, and enjoy the work of some creative women who have memorialized them.

**Hulda**

One of the seven gates of the Old City of Jerusalem is known as the Hulda Gate. We find the story of Hulda the Prophetess in the second Book of Kings (22:14), but she is probably the least know of the seven prophetesses. She lived during the period of the First Temple, sitting between its two southern and busiest gates and prophesying to the women.

It is written that King Josiah sent for Hulda to interpret the meaning of a Torah scroll, which was discovered inside the Temple open at the text of curses in Deuteronomy (28:36), which describes God leading Israel and its king into exile. Hulda confirmed the king’s fears, predicting the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the Jewish people, but softened her prophesy by relaying to King Josiah that: “Because your heart is soft and you humbled yourself before God, you will be gathered to your grave in peace and your eyes will not see the evil that I am bringing upon this place.”

**Queen Shlomzion**

Queen Shlomzion was the only legitimate Jewish queen ever to rule a fully independent Jewish kingdom. (She was also known as Salome Alexandra, but should not be confused with the Salome of the New Testament who danced for King Herod.) Shlomzion was the wife of Alexander Yanneus who, against her wishes, conducted a reign of terror against the Jewish populace. After his death, she succeeded in restoring respect for the Jewish religion when she became queen (139-67 BCE).

As a member of the Hasmonean dynasty in her own right, Shlomzion was an observant Jew and very devoted to Jewish teachings. She invited Jewish scholars to return from exile and rebuilt Jewish institutes of learning. It is said that because of her commitment, the entire land of Israel flourished. Her revitalization of Jewish life enabled the Jewish people to survive the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile that followed.
Queen Helena

Queen Helena ruled Adiabene in northern Mesopotamia, where she and her son Izates were converted to Judaism by Jewish merchants. According to Josephus, Helena came on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem between 46 and 48 CE. Finding the city struck by famine, she set out to gather food; according to Josephus she sent to Egypt for grain and to Cyprus for dried figs. She decided to stay in Jerusalem where she built palaces for herself and her sons, Izates and Monobaz.

According to the Talmud, both Helena and Monobaz donated large funds for the Temple of Jerusalem. She had a golden candlestick made and positioned over the door of the Temple, so that when the sun rose its rays were reflected from the candlestick and everybody knew that it was the time for reading the Shema morning prayer. She also donated a golden plate on which was written the text read by the High Priest when a wife suspected of infidelity was brought before him.

Queen Helena made a vow to become a Nazarite if her son returned safely from war, and lived in Israel in that ascetic state for 14 years. When her son Izates died in Mesopotamia, to which he had returned to rule, Helena followed him and occupied the throne until her own death in 65 CE. Her bones and those of her son were sent to Jerusalem, where they were buried in a burial monument that she herself had built. However, the sarcophagus of Queen Helena, with the inscription Tzara Malchata in Hebrew and Syriac, was found in the nineteenth century and can be seen today in the Louvre Museum in Paris. Remains of what is believed to have been Queen Helena’s palace were discovered in 2007 in a parking lot just outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Anna Ticho

Anna Ticho (1894-1981) is also remembered for her love of Jerusalem, and for the art she created to illustrate the city and its surroundings. Born in Moravia, she immigrated to Palestine in 1912 with her cousin, Avraham Albert Ticho, whom she later married. They settled in Jerusalem, where Dr. Ticho opened an eye clinic and Anna worked as his assistant, helping to cure the poor of the city.

Anna's attachment to the Old City became the driving force in her art, most of which was focused on its ruins and the jagged landscape of the surrounding countryside – rocky hills, barren fields, gnarled olive trees and ancient rocks. Although she did not depict human characters in her landscapes or city views, when she did draw humans, she always chose elderly people, portraying their lined and wrinkled faces. She depicted them with compassion, not pity.

Anna received the Israel Prize shortly before she died in 1980. She bequeathed her house and its art collection to the city of Jerusalem as a public center for art and cultural events. Her drawings are exhibited there and in museums all over the world.
Finding a Place for Women’s Prayer in Jerusalem

“There’s a place for us; a time and place for us.” Stephen Sondheim’s famous lyric from “West Side Story” could perhaps be an appropriate slogan for the Women of the Wall (WOW), who have overcome their own neighborhood skirmish to win the right to pray at the Western Wall.

WOW was founded in 1989, in order to enable women to take their place as Jews in leading and participating in traditional prayer and religious ceremonies. The founders organized a series of women’s prayer groups that met and prayed together at the beginning of each month (Rosh Hodesh) at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, the holiest Jewish site. There the women read from the Torah Scroll while wearing the traditional prayer shawl (tallit), phylacteries (tfillin), and skullcap (kippah).

The Western Wall is under the control of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, and, based on a decision of the Israeli government, security personnel have prevented WOW from holding organized prayer groups in the women’s section of the main public area of the Wall. Several times when they attempted to hold their prayer service in the Plaza, they met with violent and abusive behavior from ultra-Orthodox worshippers.

Since its founding, the Women of the Wall have waged a legal battle, seeking recognition of their right to pray at the Western Wall. For a short time, that right was granted to them by a Supreme Court decision, but it was quickly overturned due to extreme pressure from Israel’s ultra-Orthodox political parties. In 2003, a compromise agreement was reached, which prohibited the women from meeting at the main public area of the Wall, on grounds of public safety, but suggested an alternate site – Robinson’s Arch – which is located adjacent to the Western Wall. However, the women continue to lobby for and seek authorization to pray at the Wall.

WOW encompasses members from all branches of Judaism, including Orthodox women. They present their position in terms of women’s rights and the rights of religious liberty. The leadership of WOW states that its purpose is social advocacy – to change the current status quo, which prevents women from being able to pray freely at this holy site; to educate Jewish women and the general public about the social, political and human rights issues involved; and to empower Jewish women to take control of their religious and spiritual lives.

The group continues to hold prayer services at the Western Wall on Rosh Hodesh. The members also read from the Scroll of Esther every Purim, and from the Book of Lamentations every Tisha B’Av. They hope to deepen public understanding and awareness of their right to full access to public prayer at Judaism’s holiest accessible site and to strengthen and expand their influence on policy makers and opinion shapers in order to help them achieve their goal of freedom to express their religious beliefs.

Throughout time women have sought and fought for their place within the social, cultural, and political environments in which they found themselves. Though many faced obstacles too difficult to overcome, many others have succeeded, and we pay tribute to their efforts.

Judy Telman
Many Jewish women over the years have expressed their frustration at not feeling at home in the synagogue, or not finding their voice in the traditional Jewish prayer service.

One woman who expressed this feeling with particular anguish was the Israeli mother and daughter of two terror-attack victims – her baby daughter and her mother were killed by a bomb in 2002. The story of her pain inspired Dr. Aliza Lavie, a lecturer in political science at Israel’s Bar-Ilan University, to undertake a quest in order to find Jewish prayers written for and by women.

The result was “Tefillat Nashim”, published to great acclaim first in Hebrew in 2005, and then in English translation as “A Jewish Woman’s Prayer Book” (Spiegel & Grau, December 2008). Each prayer is presented in Hebrew, followed by an English translation, along with fascinating commentary on its origins and allusions. It has been welcomed by women of every stream of Judaism, as well as those without any affiliation, who view it as a beautiful and moving collection of prayers that draws from a variety of Jewish traditions to commemorate every occasion.

Intensive historical research took Dr. Lavie back to the thirteenth century, through rare manuscripts written in Hebrew, Yiddish, Italian, Spanish, and Ladino, through to the present day, with new prayers written for contemporary women. There are prayers for most of the occasions when a woman might turn to God – prayers for finding a husband, for her wedding day, to become pregnant, when giving birth, expressing her hopes for her children at special moments in their lives, and prayers for times of grief.

The book offers prayers for women to say on Shabbat and on the various festivals, whether as part of the traditional prayer services, or at home when lighting candles, and at other moments of contemplation. There are meditations for healing, strength, and personal growth, prayers for daily reflection and thanksgiving, and prayers for comfort and understanding in times of tragedy and loss. One moving piece written by Gleukel of Hameln in 17th century Germany asks God to help her to feed her 14 children after the death of her husband.

These prayers offer women a framework in which to express their feelings, setting them in a Jewish context and reconnecting them to our rich heritage in situations of emotional need. At the same time, they testify to the common experiences of Jewish women through the ages. Thanks to Dr. Lavie’s historical research, we can now use their words to express our feelings.

Dr. Aliza Lavie will be speaking at the ICJW Herczeg Jerusalem Seminar on the topic: “Women’s Prayer - Time, Place, Contents and Style”.

Dr. Aliza Lavie (Photo: Avshalom Levi)
The ICJW North American Regional Symposium took place in Miami Beach, Florida, in January 2009, and discussed “Migration: The Wandering World.” The participants came from across the United States and Canada, with representatives from the Latin American and Caribbean regions as well.

The keynote speaker, Cheryl Little, who is Executive Director of the Florida Immigration Advocacy Center (FIAC), presented the problems facing today’s immigrants to the United States, and explained that the “war on terror” is really a “war on immigrants.” Hate crimes have increased 25 percent since 2004, and Cheryl described cases of the shocking mistreatment of many immigrants, and of families being pulled apart. She challenged those present to help change the perception of immigrants, and to help stop the unequal treatment of different nationalities.

On the subject of reasons for migration, the seminar participants heard from an outstanding array of lawyers who work with immigrants from Cuba, Haiti, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. The panel was moderated by Jill Tavlin Schwartz, a Past President of NCJW USA’s Greater Miami Section, and Senior Attorney for the Florida State Department of Homeland Security/Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The advocates described the various reasons for migration, including economic motivation, the desire for freedom, and the need to escape from environmental catastrophes, such as those driving emigration from Haiti. They also addressed the problem of various communities being insular and reluctant to work together to create better migration laws for everyone. They recommended that it would be helpful to educate immigrants to understand the political process.

Over lunch, Symposium participants were asked to share their own migration stories, describing where they came from and how they reached where they live today. On the next page you can read the migration stories of Anne Oppenheimer, ICJW’s Administrative Treasurer, and Clarita Spitz, Secretary of the Jewish Women’s Federation of Barranquilla, ICJW’s Colombian affiliate.

Jeanne Baker, the President of the Florida American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), spoke after lunch about the rights of all persons under the U.S. Constitution, emphasizing that even non-citizens are entitled to due process, counsel, habeas corpus, a fair trial, and freedom of speech. Out of 35 million people in the U.S. who were born overseas, one-third entered the country illegally and one-third have undocumented status. This situation is now affecting employers.

Rabbi Robert Davis from Temple Beth Shalom, where the Symposium took place, spoke about the Jewish obligation toward “the stranger among us.”

The concluding session put this idea into action, with a practical discussion on “What Can We Do?” facilitated by ICJW Treasurer Sharon Gustafson. The recommendations raised included the need to educate others – both immigrants and our fellow citizens, and to advocate for immigrants to ensure that they receive due process under the law. Attention was drawn to the idea of ethical consumption – should we buy products made in foreign countries by child labor, and if we do not, will the economic situation cause people to migrate to find better jobs? We discussed the need to help change the negative portrayal of foreigners and immigrants, which should perhaps fall into the same category as fighting anti-Semitism.

Following the Seminar, NCJW USA was inspired to put these ideas into action by adding its name to a letter sent by a number of immigrant groups urging President Obama to stop deportations to Haiti pending a review of U.S. immigration policy.

Judy Lear and Sharon Allentuck, ICJW North American Regional Chairpersons
Understanding Migration

Anne Oppenheimer’s family settled in the United States during the first half of the 19th century and was already well-established and able to assist the waves of new migrants who arrived from Europe during the 20th century.

“My mother’s family arrived in America from Germany via Great Britain in the 1820s and 30s. Both my grandmother’s and grandfather’s families settled in Meridian, Mississippi, where my uncle and cousins still live. In those days Jews became merchants because they were not allowed to own property. They became a part of the thriving but small Jewish community in the Deep South. My grandfather helped his family in their small dry-goods business and went on to become a prominent businessman, financier and banker. My mother still has the silver coffee and tea set that the family hid away during the Civil War!

My grandmother, who graduated from Barnard College before age twenty, worked tirelessly for human and civil rights throughout her life. Prior to the start of World War II, my grandparents used their private funds to bring Jews out of Germany, supporting them in their new lives in Meridian.

My father’s maternal side of the family settled in Philadelphia, PA, in the 1840s, where during the Civil War they owned a cigarette factory, making “smokes” for the Union troops. My grandfather’s family arrived in the US in the 1880s. My grandparents owned a successful furniture manufacturing business, which failed during the Depression.

My parents met through a cousin who had married a Philadelphia she met in college. They married after World War II and moved from Ann Arbor, Michigan, where my father was completing his medical residency, to Louisville, Kentucy - my hometown.

My husband John’s family also came to Kentucky in the 1840s. His mother’s family pushed a cart down Market Street until they opened a furniture store in 1863.

Both families observed their Judaism. In Mississippi, my grandparents were one of the founding families of the Reform Jewish Temple in Meridian. John’s family were founder members of the thriving Reform congregation in Louisville in the 1850s, soon after the genesis of American Reform Judaism.”

Clara Steinberg was born in Mexico City to Mexican-born parents, but her grandparents were migrants from Europe. This is their story.

“My father’s parents came from Lvov, Galicia, a region that was alternately part of Austria, Poland, and Russia. Even though his father was a cobbler, they considered themselves intellectuals, and my Zeide David started work in a bookstore, where he was able to read to his heart’s content!

Jews at this time tried to avoid the draft by cutting off a finger or shooting off a toe, but my Zeide enrolled in the army as a volunteer at age 16 and fought in World War I. Zeide used to tell how he saved an officer’s life when his horse ran out of control, and when he was invited by relatives to move to Mexico, this officer helped him get a visa.

David returned briefly to Lvov to marry my Bobe Diana, who was born in Magierow, Poland. During their 3-month journey back to Mexico she became pregnant with my father, Guillermo. As a new immigrant in Mexico, my grandfather worked as a delivery boy for a movie company and later as a theater doorkeeper. Because he was able to attend the movies for free, my father learned to speak English like a native.

Bassia and Nehemia left Russia after World War I and the Russian Revolution, departing from the port of Odessa in the Ukraine. They were fortunate to leave with some money, and they wanted to come to the United States, but could not get visas. Someone recommended Mexico for its proximity to the USA. They started off in the coastal city of Veracruz, and then moved to San Jerónimo Ixtepec, where they set up a small hardware store. In 1947, word came through the Red Cross that almost all of Bassia’s family had been massacred by the Nazis.”

Clarita Steinberg married Carlos Spitz (“Charlie”) from Barranquilla, Colombia. They have three sons, David Nehemia, Abraham Jacob, and Ruben Haim.
The Council of Women’s Organizations in Israel (CWOI) is the Israeli affiliate of ICJW. This umbrella organization is today comprised of the eleven major women’s organizations in Israel, each with its own program, ideology, and aims. The Council was formed in the 1950s in order to act as a unified entity vis-à-vis international bodies abroad, and in an effort to speak in one voice on the issues that impact upon and affect the lives of women in Israel.

The member organizations of CWOI have focused on the rights of working women, striving to raise awareness in the workplace, in the community, and in government regarding the special needs of the working woman as she juggles the dual responsibilities of home and career. Much of the efforts of the women’s organizations over the past 60 years has concentrated on the need to provide Israeli women with frameworks for early-childhood education for infants and toddlers, so that mothers can go to work knowing that their children are well cared-for.

Based on the existing reality, a major push was and is still being made to encourage equal opportunities, equal pay for equivalent work, and representation on decision-making bodies. The women’s organizations have also lobbied for the introduction of legislation to put a halt to sexual harassment in the workplace, to amend the Law of Financial Relations between couples, and to form a committee for the supervision of Child Support. They have fought for the establishment of the legal rights of women regarding the assets of her spouse, and have joined the international battle for the rights of Agunot. Israeli women’s organizations have also been at the forefront of raising consciousness to manifestations of violence against women, and have established shelters for battered women around the country.

CWOI sends representatives to various Knesset committees, especially the Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Women, who work tirelessly to help halt all types of discrimination against women and to encourage the enhancement of women’s status in every field of endeavor in Israel. The member organizations of CWOI have organized many empowerment courses for women and have been instrumental in helping women to develop their leadership skills, to deal with conflict, to communicate with others, to better manage both household and career, to view parenting as a profession, and to prepare women for retirement.

However, the work of CWOI is primarily on the international scene, as an affiliate of both ICJW and ICW. It arranges periodic meetings with ambassadors and consuls serving in Israel, bringing them to visit the various social-welfare projects of the member organizations. The chairperson of CWOI is a member of the official Israeli delegation to the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women, and the Council co-operates with the Israeli Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women. A special program in honor of International Women’s Day is held at the residence of the President of Israel every March.

During the recent “Cast Lead” military operation in Gaza, the Israeli women’s organizations once again proved their worth. Throughout the country, members of the various organizations were asked to open their homes to families from the south of Israel who were under attack from rockets and missiles fired from Gaza, and to provide them with a period of peaceful respite from the trauma and tension. The Day Care Centers run by WIZO, NA’AMAT, and EMUNAH took in infants and toddlers from the beleaguered communities in order to provide some stability and loving care in a friendly, non-threatening atmosphere.

As a reward for all their efforts on behalf of women and children since before the establishment of the State, Israel’s three largest women’s organizations were awarded the coveted 2008 Israel Prize for lifetime achievement and exceptional contribution to the nation.

Aviva Kohlmann represents the Council of Women in Israel to the European Center of the International Council of Women.
Anyone who cannot make it to Jerusalem for the Herczeg Education Seminar should not feel left out! ICJW is also launching its Bea Zucker Online Bible Study Program, which is accessible to women everywhere in the world via the internet.

For several years, ICJW has offered Jewish education study programs on its website (www.icjw.org). There you can find materials about Biblical Women, Jewish Festivals, and Women’s Life Cycle Events, which can be downloaded and studied either alone, with a partner, or in a study group. Additionally, the Biblical Women materials have been translated into Spanish and Russian.

Thanks to the support of the Zucker family, this program is being expanded in April 2009, with the launch of a three-year course covering the entire Torah and a new interactive discussion forum. This venture is dedicated to the memory of Bea Zucker from Switzerland, who was European President and a Life Member of ICJW.

The ICJW Bea Zucker Online Bible Study Program course on “The Five Books of Moses: Contemporary Issues and Classic Perspectives” has been devised by Professor Zvi Zohar, Director of Bar-Ilan University’s Rappaport Center for Assimilation Research and Strengthening Jewish Vitality. The course material is being written by Dr. Bonna Devorah Haberman, founder and director of the Mistabra Institute for Jewish Textual Activism at the Women’s Studies Research Center of Brandeis University, who will also be answering participants’ questions about her course on the online forum. No previous Bible knowledge is required.

The ICJW Bea Zucker Online Bible Study Program course will focus on one Torah portion each month, with 12 study units uploaded to the ICJW website each year. This will enable the Online Bible Study Program participants to gain acquaintance with the weekly portions at a more relaxed pace than the usual weekly cycle. The ICJW Online Forum will also provide Program participants with opportunities to respond to and discuss the material they are studying each month.

To date, over 1,000 people have participated in the ICJW’s online study courses, and they have been very well received. For example, Madeleine Brecher led study sessions for a group of women in the United States, who studied the Biblical Women course together over a two-year period. She describes the hours that they spent learning together as “nothing short of sensational - a contemplative, creative, and bonding experience.” One of her study-partners reported: “My religious education has been extremely limited; therefore I came to the session with little expectation of what I might contribute. However, once we began to explore the backgrounds of Judaism, the biblical references to women, and our own Jewishness, it became apparent that each of us indeed was involved in finding our place as Jewish women in today’s society.”

The first unit of the new ICJW Bea Zucker Online Bible Study Program course will go online on April 24, 2009, starting with the first Parsha of the Torah: Bereshit. Everyone is invited to participate in this exciting new interactive educational experience by logging on to www.icjw.org/education.asp.
Durbam II

As we go to press, the attendance of governments and NGOs at the Durban Review Conference, to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, April 20-24, is still uncertain. The expectation is that this forum, like the first UN Conference Against Racism in Durban in 2001, will focus disproportionately on Israel’s perceived human rights abuses, ignoring the many other countries around the world where human rights are consistently and unacceptably trampled.

At this point Israel, Canada, the United States and Italy have said they will not be attending. The Jewish NGOs in both New York and Geneva will be holding counter-conferences to discuss the real issues applying to racism around the world. ICJW will be a co-sponsor of these events.

ICJW Calendar

May 17-20, 2009
Herczeg Jerusalem Seminar in Israel

May 21, 2009
Executive Meeting in Israel

November 2009
Administrative Meeting in Prague, Czech Republic

February/March 2010
Administrative Meeting in Israel

May 6-12, 2010
Convention & Executive Meetings in Cape Town, South Africa

ICJW Women’s Research Prize

Back in August 2008, ICJW launched its first Women’s Research Prize for academic research on subjects relating to Jewish women. The award was publicized throughout the academic world, generating a strong level of interest from an impressive number of women involved in diverse research projects. Submissions were received from Israel, Australia, France, Argentina, and Italy, and the selection committee will announce the winner at the ICJW Herczeg Jerusalem Seminar in May and on the ICJW website. The awardee will receive a certificate of recognition and a $1000 honorarium.

ICJW Convention in Cape Town

The 2010 ICJW Convention will be held in Cape Town, South Africa. ICJW and the Union of Jewish Women of South Africa are planning an exciting, meaningful, fun-filled experience at which we will celebrate 100 years of ICJW and plan for future challenges.


The Convention will be held at the President Hotel, Sea Point, three minutes from the beach. Accommodations will be available at the hotel and various guest houses, as well as options for “home hospitality” with local members. All bookings will be arranged by Global Conferences who can be contacted at icjw2010@ujwcape.co.za.