

## **Women of the Wall Program- For Teens (by Liz Piper-Goldberg)**

### **Touchstone Text:**

In Parshat Va'era, God proclaims, "*I am Adonai. I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians and deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements. And I will take you to be My people, and I will be your G-d,*" (6:6-7). These verses are the root of G-d's redemptive promise to the Jewish people.

### **Goals:**

1. Program Participants (PP's) will understand the crucial role that women have held in defending religious and civil rights throughout history;
2. PP's will familiarize themselves with the women's only, non-denominational monthly prayer group, Women of the Wall and the struggle to attain freedom of religion in Israel;
3. PP's will develop personal opinions on religious and civil rights in both America and Israel;
4. PP's will understand that there is more than one way of being Jewish and that all Jews, regardless of differences, are One People connected through a shared devotion to One Gd and a shared history.

### **Objectives:**

1. PP's will familiarize themselves with significant women throughout history who have been leaders in the fight for religious and civil rights;
2. PP's will be able to articulate their thoughts on religious and civil rights issues in Israel today;
3. PP's will be able to express opinions on their connections to the Kotel and the Women of the Wall.

### **Enduring Understanding:**

From the time of Torah to the present women have been essential leaders in the fight for religious freedom and civil equality.

### **Materials:**

1. One large photo of the Kotel
2. Twelve sheets of paper, labeled from 1 to 12 (to designate each woman's station)
3. Small sheets of paper (for PP's to write notes for the Kotel at the end of the program)
4. Pens or pencils- at least as many as PP's and Group Leaders.

### **People Needed:**

- One Program Leader (PL) in charge of introducing, facilitating and closing the program
- Twelve Group Leaders (GL's) to pose as some of history's most influential women
- One leader to pose as Anat Hoffman (for speech at end of program)
- Two facilitators needed to help ensure groups of PP's transition between stations smoothly.
- PP's should be organized into twelve groups of no more than 10.

\* It is recommended that all people involved in running the program read a copy of the program before running it; this will ensure the program runs as smoothly as possible.

**Space Needed:**

- One large room is ideal (such as a banquet hall)
- Space is needed for twelve stations of GL's to share stories of women to PP's

**Time Table:**

00:00-00:05	Introduction
00:05-00:10	Break into twelve groups
00:10-00:15	1 <sup>st</sup> rotation of women's stories
00:15-00:20	2 <sup>nd</sup> rotation of women's stories
00:20-00:25	3 <sup>rd</sup> rotation of women's stories
00:25-00:30	4 <sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories
00:30-00:35	5 <sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories
00:40-00:45	6 <sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories
00:45-00:50	7 <sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories
00:50-00:55	8 <sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories
00:55-01:00	9 <sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories
01:00-01:05	10 <sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories
01:05-01:10	11 <sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories
1:10-1:15	12 <sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories
1:15-1:25	Concluding discussions
1:25-1:30	Program concluded by 'Anat Hoffman' (PL to pose as Anat)

**Detailed Procedure:**

**00:00-00:05 Introduction**

- PL refers to the introduction script to introduce the Kotel, the Women of the Wall and the program itself.

**00:05-00:10 Break into twelve groups**

- Now the two facilitators will divide all of the PP's into small groups by giving each PP a number (starting from one and ending at twelve).
- When every PP has a number, one of the facilitators should instruct the PP's to walk to their respective stations (which should already be labeled) to begin the program.
- Facilitators should stay focused to ensure PP's organize into groups within the designated time span.

**00:10-00:15 1<sup>st</sup> rotation of women's stories**

- Each of the twelve GL's will share their stories with their first group of PP's
- Once five minutes have passed, PL instructs groups to shift one station to their right.

**00:15-00:20 2<sup>nd</sup> rotation of women's stories**

- Each of the twelve GL's will share their stories with their second group of PP's
- Once five minutes have passed, PL instructs groups to shift one station to their right.

- After each rotation, PL should continue to let all groups know when five minutes have passed and they should shift to the next station.

**00:20-00:25 3<sup>rd</sup> rotation of women's stories**

**00:25-00:30 4<sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories**

**00:30-00:35 5<sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories**

**00:40-00:45 6<sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories**

**00:45-00:50 7<sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories**

**00:50-00:55 8<sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories**

**00:55-01:00 9<sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories**

**01:00-01:05 10<sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories**

**01:05-01:10 11<sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories**

**1:10-1:15 12<sup>th</sup> rotation of women's stories**

- PL should let entire group know once the last 5-minute period has finished, so the person posing as Anat can be ready to address the group.

**1:15-1:20 Last story, by 'Anat Hoffman'**

- The GL posing as Anat Hoffman will address the group as a whole once rotations are complete and relate the history and current events surrounding the Women of the Wall.

- Refer to 'Anat's Script' (copy found in appendices) in order to share the story of Women of the Wall.

**1:20-1:30 Concluding discussions**

- PP's should remain in their last stations for the concluding discussion

- GL's will lead this discussion by referring to the 'Concluding Discussion Sheet' (copy found in appendices)

**1:25-1:30 PL leads group in prayer; PP's write letters for the Kotel**

- Once the concluding discussions are finished, PL reads the prayer for peace in the State of Israel (copy found in appendices).

- PL then explains the PP's that they now have the chance to write their own letters for the Kotel, with a specific focus on the religious and civil rights values that they have learned about. They can also write wishes for the Women of the Wall. These notes will be sent to Israel to be placed in the Western Wall.

## Appendices

### **A) Program Leader's Introduction Script**

### **B) The Women and their Stories**

### **C) Anat's Script**

### **D) Concluding Discussion sheet**

#### **A) Program Leader's Introduction Script**

- PL (points to a large photograph of the Western Wall): Can anyone identify this important landmark?

-PL: Have any of you guys ever visited the Western Wall?

- PL: The Western Wall, also known as the Kotel, is a most important historical and spiritual place for Jews. The Western Wall was originally a retaining wall of the Second Temple, built by King Herod in the first century of the Common Era. When the rest of the Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE and the Jewish people were sent out of the Land of Israel into exile, the Western Wall remained as a symbol of Jewish religious freedom.

- PL : the following statement was made by the Union for Reform Judaism's President- Rabbi Eric Yoffie- in relation to the Western Wall- *"Throughout the generations, the Kotel has been a source of inspiration to Jews everywhere. It is a concrete symbol of our love for Jerusalem and our common Jewish destiny."*

- PL: Today, the Western Wall is like a synagogue – a holy place of prayer and gathering for Jews from around the world. But not all Jewish customs are accepted at the Western Wall- for example, women are not allowed to pray out loud, nor are they allowed to carry a Torah.

- PL: In recent months, the Israeli police have increased pressure on Women of the Wall, a women's only, non-denominational monthly prayer group that meets at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. The late 2009 arrest of Nofrat Frenkel for wearing a tallit while praying at the Wall, and January's interrogation of Anat Hoffman, who serves as both director of our counterpart, the Israel Religious Action Center, and leader of Women of the Wall, are only two examples of this intensified harassment.

- PL: The Woman of the Wall have echoes of Rosa Parks in this country. They are a modern day example of women leading the way towards defending religious equality in Israel. In the following hour or so, you will be exposed to a number of different women who have been true leaders of civil and religious rights throughout history.

- PL: You will now be counted into twelve different groups. Remain with these groups as you meet history's most influential women. You guys have five minutes with each woman, so when I say 'five minutes are up!' it means it's time for you to move on to the next station.

(\*Facilitators should now be counting the PP's, if they are not- PL should get them started!)

## **B) The Women and their Stories**

### **1) Miriam the Prophet:**

- Name means “one who loves or is loved by God”
- Older sister of Moses
- Suggested to the Pharaoh’s daughter who found Moses in the river that a Hebrew woman should be found as a nurse for the baby
- Led the Hebrew women in song and dance after Pharaoh’s army was drowned in the Red Sea

### **2) Deborah the Prophet:**

- Was a judge. She rendered her judgments from under a palm tree. Wife of Lapidot
- Asked Barak, a military commander, to attack the oppressive king of Canaan, Jabin. Barak said he would only go if Deborah came with him. She did, and the Israelites won the battle, just as she had prophesized.

### **3) Rosa Parks:**

- On December 1, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, Parks, age 42, refused to obey a bus driver’s order that she give up her seat to make room for a white passenger.
- Her actions sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott.
- Was a secretary of the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP
- Died in 2005 at the age of 92
- Ask teens what they know about Rosa Parks and why what she did was so important. Encourage the students to talk about how they feel about what she did and why she is considered a hero.

### **4) Susan B. Anthony:**

- Was born the 2nd of 8 children in a strict Quaker home in Adams, MA
- Played a pivotal role in the 19th century women's rights movement to introduce women's suffrage (voting rights) into the United States
- In her early years, she helped support the temperance movement to ban alcohol
- In 1869, she and Elizabeth Cady Stanton founded the National Women's Suffrage Association (NWSA), an organization dedicated to gaining women's suffrage.

### **5) Lily Ledbetter:**

- A supervisor at Goodyear Tire and Rubber’s plant in Alabama, who was paid significantly less than her male counterparts at the company. She sued the company for unfair pay.
- The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 was enacted by the 111th United States Congress and signed into law by President Barack Obama on January 29, 2009.
- It amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 stating that the 180-day statute of limitations for filing an equal-pay lawsuit regarding pay discrimination resets with each new discriminatory paycheck.
- The law was a direct answer to Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., a U.S. Supreme Court decision holding that the statute of limitations for presenting an equal-pay

lawsuit begins at the date the pay was agreed upon, not at the date of the most recent paycheck.

**6) Miep Gies** (who died earlier this week at the age of 100):

- Was one of the Dutch citizens who hid Anne Frank and her family from the Nazis during World War II
- Discovered and preserved Anne Frank's diary after the Franks were arrested
- Unsuccessfully tried to bribe an Austrian Nazi officer to release her friends after they were discovered
- In 1994, was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany; in 1995, she received the Yad Vashem medal; and in 1997, she was knighted by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands.

**7) Helen Keller:**

- Contracted a fever when she was 19 months old, and emerged both blind and deaf
- Was instructed by Anne Sullivan, who taught her to communicate by using sign language into Helen's hand
- Was the first deafblind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree
- Wrote an autobiography, *The Story of My Life*

**8) Abigail Adams:**

- Wife of John Adams, the 2nd president of the U.S.A.
- Mother of John Quincy Adams, the 6th president of the U.S.A.
- Wrote many letters of advice to John Adams while he was in Philadelphia during the Continental Congresses
- Was very politically active when she was First Lady in Washington, D.C.
- Was an advocate for women's and slaves' rights

**9) Nellie Bly:**

- Pioneered women's roles in journalism and investigative journalism.
- Wrote an expose after going undercover into the Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island in New York
- Made a trip around the world in emulation of Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*

**10) Eleanor Roosevelt:**

- Wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt
- Was the first First Lady to hold weekly press conferences and started writing a newspaper column, "My Day"
- Held 348 press conferences over the span of her husband's twelve-year presidency, promoting humanitarian causes, such as unemployment, poverty, education, rural life, and the role of women in society.

**11) Sojourner Truth:**

- Born Isabella Baumfree, a slave in Swartekill, New York
- Was an African-American abolitionist and women's rights activist

- Her best-known speech, “Ain't I a Woman?”, was delivered in 1851 at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio

**12) Golda Meir:**

- Was the 4th Prime Minister of Israel, and the 1st female Prime Minister of Israel
- Was Prime Minister during the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, the Six Day War, and the Yom Kippur War
- While prime minister, she spent much of her time developing support for Israel by meeting with western leaders

### C) Anat's Script

- “Beginning with the Book of Exodus, throughout history, and to this day, women have served as agents of change and voices of redemption. In fulfilling this sacred role from the time of the Torah to the present, women have been essential leaders in the fight for religious freedom. The current series of events surrounding the Women of the Wall, a women’s only monthly prayer group of which I have been a member for over twenty years, presents us with an opportunity and even an obligation to support those fighting for the religious rights of women in Israel. These events are reminders that while we are all Jews with differing approaches to ritual and Halacha (traditional Jewish law), we are tied together through shared devotion to the One God and a shared history.

- Women of the Wall is a women’s only, non-denominational monthly prayer group which meets every Rosh Hodesh to pray at the Kotel. Based on a decision made by Israel’s government, security personnel have prevented us from holding organized prayer groups in the women’s section of the main public area of the Kotel plaza. Instead, we must hold our prayer sessions in Robinson’s arch, an area adjacent to the Kotel plaza. *(Short description of Robinson’s arch still needed)*

- Women of the Wall is sometimes accused of protesting against the “status quo” at the Western Wall. In fact, there is no status quo at the Wall — things change all the time. Men and women used to enter the Western Wall plaza together through the Jewish Quarter’s Dung Gate; in 1994, separate, gender-segregated entrances were created. Within the past decade, women soldiers were still allowed to sing the national anthem during ceremonies at the Wall — now they are instructed to be content with mouthing the words.

- Simply put, our goal is to obtain the freedom to pray and to do everything that is halachically permitted for women on the women’s side of the mechitza (the divider that separates the men’s and women’s side of the Kotel). This includes reciting prayers together that do not require a minyan, and most of all, it includes reading from the Torah. (Though it has been many years since we have been able to read from the Torah in the women’s section at the Wall.)

- At a minimum, we want to be allowed to pray at the Wall for one hour each month, free of injury and fear. This should not be a provocative request.”

### **D) Concluding Discussion sheet**

- After Anat's speech- GL's should use the following document to help them lead their discussions on Women of the Wall, the Civil Rights Movement in the US, and the struggle for religious rights in Israel.

#### Essential Questions:

- So can anyone tell me who the Women of the Wall are?
- What is the relationship between the issues presented by the Women of the Wall and the Civil Rights Movement?
- Why should I care about the Women of the Wall?
- What can I do to support the Women of the Wall?
- What contributions have women made to the fight for religious and civil rights throughout history?
- In what ways are the issues that the Women of the Wall are facing similar to the issues faced by the American Civil Rights Movement?

#### Conclusion

##### **Briefly discuss the history of Jews in the Civil Rights Movement.**

-Many Jewish Americans went to Mississippi in 1964 to fight for civil rights in what became known as the "Freedom Summer." Others helped register African American voters in various southern states.

- Further, much of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act were written in the building that is home to the Reform Movement's Religious Action Center, which has long been a hub of civil rights activity.

- Several early presidents of the NAACP were Jews, including Kivie Kaplan, a former Honorary Vice-Chair of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (now the Union for Reform Judaism). Currently, Rabbi David Saperstein, the RAC's Director, is the sole white member of the National Board of the NAACP.

##### **Consider the parallels between the Israelite struggle for freedom and the struggle of African Americans.**

- First, there are common elements of enslavement, the desire for liberty, the role and importance of leadership within the community, the tendency within the ruling class to resist the forces of social change, and the ultimate triumph of justice.

In Parshat Va'era, God proclaims, "*I am Adonai. I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians and deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements. And I will take you to be My people, and I will be your G-d,*" (6:6-7). These verses, well known from the Pesach seder, are the root of G-d's redemptive promise to the Jewish people.

#### Essential Questions

- What is the relationship between the issues of Women of the Wall and Israelite struggle for freedom as depicted in Shemot, Exodus?
- What is my role regarding the issues presented by Women of the Wall?
- Why is the Kotel a sacred place for Jews? What is my connection the Kotel?

**E) The prayer for peace in the State of Israel:**

*Oh Heavenly One, Protector and Redeemer of Israel, bless the State of Israel which marks the dawning of hope for all who seek peace. Shield it beneath the wings of Your love; spread over it the canopy of Your peace; send Your light and truth to all who lead and advise, guiding them with Your good counsel. Establish peace in the land and fullness of joy for all who dwell there.*