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“On Your New Moons”: The Feminist Transformation of the Jewish New Moon Festival¹

by Ron H. Feldman

Introduction

Over the last 30 years the Jewish new moon festival known as *Rosh Hodesh*,² the observance marking the beginning of the new month of the Jewish luni-solar calendar, has been reappropriated by Jewish women who have transformed it into a celebration of women within Judaism. The observance involves a gathering that is usually restricted to women and takes place at a private home or a synagogue on the evening of Rosh Hodesh.³ While the exact activities of the gathering vary, they tend to include prayers, blessings, rituals, study, food, and socializing related to the month and the annual holidays that will fall in it. Freedom to innovate and experiment within Jewish tradition is a key element of these activities, although the amount will vary depending on where each group's denomination falls on the Jewish religious spectrum (from Orthodox to Secular, with Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Renewal in between).

While Susannah Heschel's 1983 groundbreaking collection of essays, *On Being a Jewish Feminist*, included a few essays touching on Rosh Hodesh, the first book devoted to the revival of Rosh Hodesh was *Miriam's Well: Rituals for Jewish Women Around the Year* published by Penina Adelman in 1986. A subsequent collection of essays published by Susan Berrin in 1996, *Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology*, provided more perspectives on both the history and practice of the holiday. The newfound significance of Rosh Hodesh is reflected, for example, by its designation as a major section of Marcia Falk's feminist liturgy published in 1996, *The Book of Blessings: New Jewish Prayers for Daily Life, the Sabbath, and the New Moon Festival*, some of which has been set to music.⁴ The observance of Rosh Hodesh has become sufficiently important and mainstream that the 1999 theme for the annual “Feast of Jewish Learning” week sponsored by the Bureau of Jewish Education (BJE) in San Francisco had the theme,

“Rosh Hodesh: It's About Time.” The BJE created a web-site and multimedia packet of educational materials which was sent to Jewish institutions throughout the Bay Area to increase awareness and observance of the holiday, including suggestions for family activities.⁵ Even Hadassah, one of the oldest and largest American Jewish women's organizations, has published its own compendium, *Moonbeams: A Hadassah Rosh Hodesh Guide*.⁶

In this paper, I briefly review some of the biblical and Talmudic textual sources for Rosh Hodesh, as well as later kabbalistic and contemporary Orthodox rituals. This lineage of observance is often thought of as “traditional” Judaism. I then discuss the feminist transformation of Rosh Hodesh, tracing how its proponents' claims to authenticity seek to affirm a continuity with traditional elements at the same time that they consciously change that tradition with the aim of making it responsive to their concerns. In particular, I discuss why what I will call the “feminist Rosh Hodesh” works as a focal point for the articulation of dual commitments to Judaism and feminism by many Jewish women. While the *process* of renegotiating cultural commitments as a minority group is familiar and similar to various adaptations of Jewish culture⁷ into categories amenable to the modern world – such as religion, history, ethnicity, nationality – the *direction* of the change made by the feminist Rosh Hodesh toward postmodern, ecofeminist categories and values is a new and different development.

Part of this will include attention to the changing understanding of the relationship between humans, God, and nature. While it is well known that the Jewish holidays include both agricultural and mytho-historic elements, both of which are linked to God, these three elements exist together under tension, constantly subject to flux and change. Different eras have shifted the emphasis between these and reinterpreted them. Indeed, the multidimensional tension provides a rich source for cultural evolution and renewal. As I explore the feminist Rosh Hodesh, I will also consider it as an example of how the relations of these elements is renegotiated as culture changes.

Rosh Hodesh in the Bible

Genesis 1:14-18 describes the creation of the sun, moon, and stars as calendrical markers “to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times – the days and the years.” While the moon is mentioned, its role is to “dominate the night” and no specific mention is made of the month as a unit of time. The first mention of Rosh Hodesh is made in

Numbers 10:10, which discusses sounding trumpets over the sacrifices of the Rosh Hodesh and festivals, while Numbers 28:11-15 specifies the offerings to be included in the sacrifice each Rosh Hodesh. King Saul seems to observe a two day Rosh Hodesh feast (Samuel I 20:18-42) while Psalms 81:4-5 refers to the need to blow the *shofar*-ram's horn on the new moon and the full moon. In brief, like the Sabbath and other holidays, Rosh Hodesh required proper sacrifices.

Rosh Hodesh in the Talmudic Period

As reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls, collected during the 200-300 years prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, some Jewish groups seem to have followed a calendar that included schematic months, not lunar months, and by implication interpreted the biblical Rosh Hodesh as the beginning of the schematic "new month" rather than "new moon."⁸ However, at least since the period of the Mishnah (around 100 CE) Jewish practice has assumed Rosh Hodesh is synonymous with the appearance of the new moon, which marks the beginning of the lunar month.

The Mishnah and Talmud offer an extensive discussion of the procedures the rabbis used for marking, affirming, and declaring the Rosh Hodesh. This was important because the observance of the holidays in their proper time was critical, and depended upon the declaration of the new month. The text claims that the new month was determined by observation, and that the rabbinical court would declare the beginning of a new month based on the acceptance of testimony by witnesses who claimed to have seen the new crescent. Nevertheless, the testimony was checked against calculations done by the court according to a confidential method. Upon the declaration of the new moon, beacons were lit and runners were sent to the diaspora to notify the whole Jewish world about the advent of the new month.⁹ An important aim of the Talmud is to assert that what is important for proper calendrical observance is *not* the sighting of the new moon, but the human court's *affirmation* of such an observation. The argument is that the only times that are holy are the ones declared so by the court.¹⁰

This was an important step in the development of a Jewish calendar based exclusively on calculation with no observational component. Traditionally, Jews attribute the publication of the calculations for the calendar to the Patriarch Hillel ben Judah in 359 CE, while some scholars believe this may have taken place as late as the seventh century CE.¹¹ With the calculated calendar, the new month begins not with the sighting of the

new crescent moon, but at the calculated moment of astronomical alignment of the sun, moon, and earth, called in Hebrew *hitkabbzuz*, the moment of "gathering."¹² This moment, when the moon is invisible because it is directly between earth and sun, results in the *molad*, literally the "birth" of the new moon.¹²

One of the main transformations of Jewish religion after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 68 CE was the shift from sacrifice to prayer as the technique for human-divine contact. One result, often overlooked, was that since the agricultural offerings were no longer essential, nature itself was less important in rabbinical Judaism than in the priestly Judaism of the Temple. The shift from a calendar based on observation to one based on calculation similarly distanced Jewish practice from another aspect of nature, in this case the lunation.

Close observation of the moon — and, by implication, human dependency on its rhythms — was no longer a necessary element in Jewish ritual practice. The human-God connection could now take place without nature as an intermediary; being attuned to nature (sighting the new moon) was replaced by synchronization to an abstraction of nature (the average lunation) calculated by human mathematics. Sacred time was not determined by nature, but by humans. With nature no longer a necessary intermediary, nature was implicitly distanced from both God and humans; nature was, therefore, less important and less sacred than before, a demonstration of nature in comparison to humanity.

The assumed adequacy of human calculation implied a change in attitude toward natural processes and a reduced sense of dependence on them. While this did not allow humans to control the lunar cycle — in the sense of being able to change it — it did give humans (specifically, the Rabbis) the tools to approximate the lunations and control the calendar that determines human activities.

The unpredictability of the appearance of the new moon was a continuous problem for the religious authorities.¹³ By substituting calculation for observation, the moon's cycle was controlled, and could become symbol of regularity instead of unpredictability.¹⁴ While the observation of the new moon was no longer calendrically important, its subjection to calculation made it safe to become metaphorically important. In place of the Temple sacrifices, the Talmud reports a new practice of reciting a blessing upon sighting the new moon:

Rabbi Aha ben Hanna also said in the name of Rabbi Assi in Rabbi Yohanan's name: Whoever blesses the new moon in its due time welcomes,

as it were, the face of the Shechinah [Divine Presence]...In the school of Rabbi Ishmael it was taught: Had Israel inherited no other privilege than to greet the face of their Heavenly Father every month, it would be sufficient. (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 42a)¹⁵

This text reflects the beginnings of the Kiddush Levanah, the monthly ritual of observing and sanctifying the new moon. This takes place during the waxing phase and is preceded by the formal announcement in the synagogue on the sabbath prior to the new moon of its impending arrival (about this, more will be said below). It is also worth noting that the gender of the moon is still not clearly settled, depicted both as the face of Shechinah (usually understood as feminine) and Heavenly Father.

Rosh Hodesh and the Kabbalists

From the mystical kabbalists of the medieval and early-modern periods evolved many new rituals and interpretations of old rituals. Of relevance in this context, the kabbalists of sixteenth century Safed elaborated on Rosh Hodesh by inventing a holiday called *Yom Kippur Katan* – Minor Day of Atonement – that fell on the day before Rosh Hodesh. The custom included fasting during the day and penitential prayers aimed at purification. The kabbalists associated the moon with Shechinah, which they understood as the feminine aspect of God.¹⁶ Just as the moon receives its light from the sun (which are gendered female and male, respectively), the Shechinah receives her light from the masculine aspect of God. The kabbalists saw the darkest day of the lunar cycle as the symbol of Her exile from God; the rebirth of the moon is also the renewal of Shechinah. Kabbalistic doctrine asserts that since the Shechinah went into exile with the people of Israel, the renewal of the moon represents the messianic possibility of redemption, including the “ingathering of the exiles,” a phrase linguistically connected to the astronomical “gathering,” the term used for the alignment of sun, moon, and earth.¹⁷

This theme of exile and redemption in kabbalistic doctrine and the associated ritual practices of *tikkun*-repair, aimed at healing imbalances imputed to exist within God, permeate kabbalism. For the kabbalists, natural phenomena are not metaphors for the mytho-historic relations of Israel and God, but are *real* energetic moments that can be used to achieve *tikkun*-repair in both the divine and earthly realms. This different perspective is part of the ancient tension within Judaism between the view of God as the transcendent creator who is minimally present in the world versus the view

of God as the immanent force that is actively present throughout the world. The former view tends to be favored by legalists while mystics adhere to the latter.

Theurgic ritual requires proper attunement to imputed physical energies on the assumption that they are actually linked to their source in the divine realm. *Yom Kippur Katan* – Minor Day of Atonement – is similar to other practices whose effectiveness depends upon performance at the correct time (of day, week, and/or year) that include *tikkun leil Shavuot* (all night study on the holiday of Shavuot that culminates at dawn), *kabalat Shabbat* (welcoming the sabbath at sunset on Friday evening each week), and *tikkun hatzerot* (nightly meditations that take place at midnight). Thus, natural cycles of time were revived as an important dimension of ritual practice. Nature is understood and experienced as a conduit for the human-divine connection, although this is through theurgic *tikkun*-repair rather than temple sacrifice.

Rosh Hodesh in Contemporary Orthodoxy

While most Jewish denominations still include some aspect of Rosh Hodesh observance, contemporary Orthodoxy asserts a privileged position in Judaism as the legitimate successor and preserver of the Jewish tradition. Though there are many varieties of Judaism today, I will confine this summary to the traditions passed down in this lineage because other Jews often still see it as a baseline against which their practice is compared. As we will see, there is a strong continuation of the Talmudic perspective.

In the contemporary Orthodox Artscroll siddur we find the Talmudic assertion of human authority to determine the holidays re-affirmed:

... the authority to regulate the calendar [is] a function that the Torah confers upon the Beis Din [rabbinical court]. In effect, by proclaiming when the months will begin, the Jewish people control the very existence of the Festivals. The Sabbath, on the other hand, comes every seventh day, independent of the Jewish people and the calendar.¹⁸

The contrast drawn between Rosh Hodesh and the Sabbath is revealing. On the one hand, we are told that humans have the ability to recognize or withhold recognition of the natural cycle of the moon – a cycle which takes place whether or not we mark its passage. On the other hand,

the Sabbath is naturalized with the assertion that it comes every seven days “independent of the Jewish people.” This independence is exegetically derived from the creation story in Genesis 1:1-2:3, which describes the Sabbath as the final act of God’s creation of the world.

This dual move – to make cultural what is natural, and naturalize what is cultural – conspires to decrease the importance of the natural world. While nature still acts independently of humans, the human ability to recognize and impute processes to nature subtly subordinates nature to human consciousness. But nature and natural cycles are not eliminated from Jewish practice; they are preserved in a renegotiated relationship. An examination of the two main rituals associated with the new moon and the commentaries on their significance will help clarify this.

The first observance is the *Birkat haHodesh*-Blessing of the New Month. This takes place in the synagogue on the Sabbath prior to the arrival of the new month, announcing the day during the coming week when Rosh Hodesh will arrive. The prayer requests a life of peace, blessing, sustenance, health, wealth, honor, fear of heaven, fear of sin, love of Torah, and “gather[ing] in [of the] dispersed from the four corners of the earth; all Israel becoming comrades.”¹⁹ The reference to “gathering” here – *yikabetz* – is also a play on words referencing the astronomical “gathering” of the sun, moon, and earth, which becomes a symbol for messianic anticipation. The lunar cycle is also expanded into a metaphor for the ethical life of Israel:

Just as the moon is reborn after a period of decline and total disappearance, so, too, Israel’s decline will end and its light will once again blaze to fullness. As an example, the Midrash (*Shemos Rabbah* 15) states, ‘when Israel is worthy of God’s favor it is like the waxing moon, but when it is not worthy, it is like the declining moon.’²⁰

Samson Raphael Hirsch, the founder of modern Orthodoxy, takes this in an individual psychological direction, claiming: “This is to be the model for your own conduct! Even as the moon renews itself by the law of nature, so you, too, should renew yourselves, but of your own free will.”²¹

The second observance, the *Kiddush Levanah* – Sanctification of the New Moon, is the service that incorporates an actual sighting of the moon. It can take place any evening during the waxing phase of the new moon, ideally outdoors where the moon can be seen. The prayers include psalms and praises for God as creator of the heavens. In particular, one is to “rise on the toes as if in dance” and repeat the following phrase three times:

“Just as I dance toward you but cannot touch you, so may none of my enemies be able to touch me for evil.”²² “David, King of Israel, is alive and enduring”, a song reaffirming faith in the coming of the messiah, is shortly followed by the festive singing of “*Siman Tav umazel tov*,” which literally means, “may there be a good sign and a good constellation (of the zodiac).” The service concludes with the *aleinu* prayer, affirming God as the “Master of all.”²³

While a substantial part of *Kiddush HaLevanah* might seem like a magical ritual to keep evil human enemies away, the Artscroll sidur comments that the reason for the ritual is that “the only way we can recognize the existence of God is through His works . . . Thus when we greet the moon, we greet its Maker and Guide.”²⁴ Yet, the editor appears embarrassed, hastening to minimize the importance of the moon, explaining why the service concludes with the *aleinu* prayer: “Lest our ecstatic greeting of the moon be interpreted as worship of a heavenly body, God forbid, we recite *aleinu*, which is our declaration that we worship only God and none other.”²⁵ Indeed, Marcia Falk remarks on her feelings when she first saw Orthodox men performing this ritual in Jerusalem: “Nothing I had seen in feminist Jewish rituals – or, indeed, in the rituals of many non-Jewish feminists – looked more open to the label of ‘paganism’ (a label frequently used to censure Jewish feminist innovations) than what I was witnessing here, on the streets of Sha’arey Heseled, being enacted by members of a devout Jewish sect.”²⁶

While the contemporary Orthodox new moon rituals preserve elements of both the Talmudic and kabbalistic practices, the interpretation of the rituals minimizes the kabbalistic legacy of connecting to God through nature while following the Talmudic tendency to subsume nature, in the instance of the moon, into a symbol of the either God or Israel. On the one hand the moon is a symbol of God, either as Shechinah or as the handiwork of God the creator. On the other hand the lunar cycle becomes a symbol for the moral and mytho-historical destiny of the people Israel. While the moon’s patterns are observed, the moon is seen only as metaphor, either for Israel’s fate or as a pointer to God.

Rosh Hodesh in Jewish Feminist Thought and Practice

Gaining Jewish Legitimacy

In contrast to the Artscroll siddur, where I found no mention of any special relation of women to Rosh Hodesh, in an early article (re)claiming Rosh Hodesh as a feminist holiday Arlene Agus traces a continuous association of women with the holiday from the Talmud through Rashi, the Shulchan Aruch and others into the modern era.²⁷ The Jerusalem Talmud states that, "It is an acceptable custom for women not to work on the New Moon," (Jerusalem Talmud, Taanit 1:6). This women's holiday is justified by a passage in *Pirke DeRabbi Eliezer* (Chapter 45) in which women refused to give their jewelry for the construction of the Golden Calf; the Rosh Hodesh holiday was their reward.²⁸

The aim of this portion of Agus' discourse is to claim a legitimate lineage and authenticity for Rosh Hodesh within the Jewish tradition. The result is that "for many Jewish feminists, Rosh Chodesh became a 'room of one's own,' a room that did not require leaving our homes within Judaism ... We were defined within the norm rather than as outside it."²⁹ This "room" became comfortable for feminists because, to extend the metaphor, it was "redecorated" in a number of ways that dropped, changed, and added to the traditional themes. The aim is a two-way legitimization vis-à-vis both Jewish men and non-Jewish women. The major elements of this redecoration that I will examine include: 1) changing God imagery, and 2) valorization of women's bodies. The bodily focus in turn leads to a) an embodied spirituality, b) an ecofeminist connection to nature, and c) a multicultural identification with all women.

Changing God Imagery: Goddess-Talk

One aspect of this "redecorating" is a shift in divine imagery; a key issue in Jewish feminist thought.³⁰ While the gender, if any, of Shechinah in the Talmudic reference attributed to Rabbi Yohanan is unclear, Jewish feminists have adopted the medieval kabbalistic view of the Shechinah as the feminine aspect of God, making the moon a symbol of the divine feminine. Another shift in imagery is the feminization of the traditional *Rachaman* (the "merciful" God) to *Rachamemah* ("merciful" Goddess).

This transformation is explained by pointing out that the Hebrew root is *rechem* (womb), an acronym for *raheit hodeshim* (new moons).³¹ Thus, in Geela-Rayzel Raphael's revised liturgy for the Kiddush Levana, gender and terminology are shifted: God is referred to both as Shechinah, and as Rachamemah. "Blessed are You, Shechinah, Queen of the World... Blessed be Rachamemah, Source of New Light, Renewer of the Moons in her season."³² Although Raphael does not make this link, there is an obvious connection to be made between Rachamemah and the Hebrew term for the appearance of the new moon: the *malud*, literally the "birth." In addition, the calendrical calculus of intercalation by which a thirteenth month is added to the year – and by extension, the calculation of the calendar as a whole – is known as *sod haibbur*, literally, the "secret of conception." Thus, Rosh Hodesh becomes a holiday connecting to the divinity in the feminine gender, a celebration of Goddess as the Divine Creator who birthed the cosmos.

Valorizing Women's Bodies: Embodied Spirituality

Another critical "redecorating" is, as Agus writes, that "Rosh Chodesh corresponds to and celebrates the life-giving monthly cycle of the community's women."³³ This link to menstruation is echoed throughout the feminist Rosh Hodesh literature, and is considered self-evident. A typical example is an essay by Robin Ziegler, "My Body, My Self and Rosh Chodesh." As part of her effort to claim a Jewish link between women, the moon and Rosh Hodesh, Zeigler quotes from a medieval Jewish source, *Or Zaura*, that points "to the unique spiritual connection between women's cycles and the cycle of the moon:"

You should know that each month the woman becomes renewed and immerses herself and returns to her husband, and she is beloved to him as on the wedding day. Similarly the moon becomes renewed every Rosh Chodesh and everybody desires to see it, just as the woman when she becomes renewed every month, her husband desires her, and she is endeared to him like a new woman.³⁴

But, as with many other feminists who are working hard to reclaim a place in the tradition, she chooses to overlook the clearly androcentric perspective of the passage from *Or Zaura*, i.e., that of a man desiring good sex with a "new woman." In this passage a man speaks to another man,

whom he assumes understands the passions of “the wedding day.” The women herself has no voice, nor is she part of the intended audience.

Ziegler implicitly fills in the woman as reader – and sex isn’t particularly on her mind. She is thinking about women’s bodies and biology, continuing a focus that Chava Weissler finds in her study of *tkhines*, traditional women’s prayers dating from the early modern period.³⁵ Echoing Eve’s pride in her ability to give birth, noted by Ilana Pardes³⁶ in her feminist reading of Genesis, Ziegler celebrates women’s abilities to create life:

The monthly blood or lack thereof heralds an important message about creation. Loss of blood cries out about the loss of potential life. Likewise the absence of blood heralds hope of new birth and an addition to humankind. Woman and man have become united with God in the creation of a new life. Yet it is woman who has been blessed with the special opportunity to nurture the fetus and birth the new life. She is alone in her tasks, just as she is truly alone in her experience of blood loss.³⁷

Even Jewish feminists who are critical of utilizing traditional Jewish texts because of their unrelenting misogyny advocate celebrating Rosh Chodesh on the basis of affirming menstruation as “women’s primal connection to the moon.”³⁸ Typical of this is a contemporary midrash by Penina Adelman who writes about women menstruating together at Mt. Sinai. Shefa Gold’s “Ancestors’ Song” also emphasizes this connection:

Rejoice in the sliver of moon
Whose voice announces a new-born light
Let the flowers of blood descend
From the womb of the fertile night⁴⁰

While menstruation is valorized in the feminist Rosh Hodesh literature, the ritual bath immersion mentioned in Or Zarua is de-emphasized, probably because its assumed need for purification is problematic. Adelman notes that for traditional Judaism, “Women are *gashmiut*; earthy and tactile beings, restricted by their bodies which change every month like the moon ... In contrast, men are considered to be *nuchniut*, spiritual and heavenly beings.”⁴¹ Thus, for traditional Judaism the ritual bath is necessary to elevate women from the merely physical/natural experience of menstruation, which is thought to be repulsive to men,⁴² to the physical and spiri-

tual level appropriate to meet her husband. For Jewish feminists, in contrast, a woman’s body is good as it is and no purification is necessary – and certainly not to mollify male qualms about the female body! A ritual bath is not needed for purification since menstruation itself purges the body, preparing it to host new life.

Ziegler claims another connection of women to the moon that is even closer than menstruation, quoting from a non-Jewish text to show how all women bear the image of the moon in their body:

Every woman can look into herself and see the crescent moon shining there. If you use a speculum, such as is used for inspecting the cervix, a mirror and a torch [flashlight], you will see inside an appearance rather like a globe resting in a crescent, all of which shines and glistens. This is the cervix of the womb.⁴³

Although Ziegler does not make the link, this could be an interesting feminist answer to male circumcision, the ancient Jewish sign of the covenant. For women, the sign inscribed by Goddess in flesh is the sign of the moon, placed in a similarly private place linked to sexuality and procreation. For women this is an interior presence that they are born with, not the result of cutting as in circumcision. In sharp contrast to Jewish men, for whom circumcision has always been the mark distinguishing them as “members” of the covenant, this emphasis on women’s bodies and biology allows Jewish feminists to affirm connections to Goddess, to nature, and to all women.

As can be seen in the texts cited above, the advocates of the feminist Rosh Hodesh assert that women are close to Shechinah because their bodies are attuned to Her symbol and bear Her sign: the moon. But this is not merely a metaphor; because of the connection between the moon and their bodies, women’s spirituality is considered to be different than men’s spirituality because it reaches toward Goddess *through* the body. Chava Weissler has remarked on the centrality of women’s biology in contemporary Jewish feminist ritual, noting the “echo of themes found in the liturgical creations of other American feminists, whether Christian, ‘pagan,’ or New Age.”⁴⁴ She also notes how the new rituals emphasize biology even more than traditional *tkhines*, and how they emphasize group ritual in contrast to the *tkhines*, which were usually recited by women privately. It seems clear to me that the group focus has its source in the consciousness-raising groups that were a key element of the women’s movement that began in the 1960’s, which in turn sparked the development of feminist thought within Juda-

ism. As Weisler notes, these groups are an assertion of women's right to develop "their own communal way of worship ... Separated from the usual mixed male and female society, women feel free to take on the task of reinterpreting and refining language, ritual, sacred symbol and story so that they can feel at one with their own authentic traditions."⁴⁵

Valorizing Women's Bodies: Jewish Women, Nature, and Ecofeminism

The closeness to nature is extended in an ecofeminist direction by seeing nature as an essential element in the practice of Rosh Hodesh. Raphael writes, "In carrying out this ritual, the participants will be inspired to heal the planet, our people, and ourselves."⁴⁶ Similarly, Berrin believes that, "Observing the new moon ... reminds us that it is only within partnership with the Creator that the gifts and cycles of nature are sustained."⁴⁷ Thus, the moon is a symbol not only for Shechinah as the Creator, but also of nature. Closeness to Goddess is achieved through action to sustain the health of the natural cycles of the planet. This close connection between Goddess and nature is reflected in the time of celebration: in contrast to the traditional *Birkat HaHodesh* or the *Kiddush Levanah*, which take place either *before* or *after* Rosh Hodesh, the Rosh Hodesh gathering should take place (at least in principle) *on* Rosh Hodesh,⁴⁸ the day of the moon's rebirth (i.e., at conjunction, when the moon is not yet visible), which according to the Jerusalem Talmud was acceptable as a holiday from work for women. Lynn Gottlieb claims "the natural day of rest in a lunar cycle is the new moon."⁴⁹ Through this attunement to the lunar cycle, women's closeness to nature is celebrated, not denigrated. The attunement to nature that women can achieve through their natural bodily rhythms is an advance, not a curse, because it makes them aware of themselves as part of nature. The more embodied and natural humans are, the closer to Goddess they are.

Nature is not only a proof of Goddess, but also a way to Goddess: Arthur Waskow makes this explicit in his call for a "feminist Judaism" that would mean not just equality for women, but "our being open to the lessons women might teach — whether these lessons are rooted in biology or culture."⁵⁰ Adapting and expanding the Rosh Hodesh cycle as a model, Waskow calls for a "celebration of the earth through the cycles of *shmitah* and Jubilee (a kind of body-cycle writ large, a kind of menstrual cycle of the Shekhinah, expressed in the land and the society)."⁵¹

In *Miriam's Well: Rituals for Jewish Women Around the Year*, which has become an important guide to women's Rosh Hodesh ceremonies, Penina Adelman offers monthly rituals that incorporate both the seasons of the natural year and the mytho-historic elements of the Jewish holidays, with a special focus on the women in the Bible. Noting that the Hebrew word for "womb" is also an acronym for "new moons," Adelman writes, "The circle of the year is a womb in which the seasons, the earth, the festivals, the sacred stories are born anew, again and again."⁵² She explicitly counts herself among ecofeminists who share four premises, "holism, interdependence, equality and process. These principles pervade contemporary ritual as it has emerged among Jewish women."⁵³ In contrast to what they characterize as a hierarchical, patriarchal view that sees humans — i.e., men — as most human and god-like in their superiority to nature, ecofeminists assert that humans can become closer to God *through* nature, not by separation from nature. This view is reflected in Marcia Falk's condemnation of "anthropocentrism (what some call 'species-ism'), that is, the belief that the human species is 'godlier' than the rest of creation,"⁵⁴ as well as Judith Plaskow's call for a shift in images about God and community away from "hierarchical dualisms" toward part and whole.⁵⁵

Valorizing Women's Bodies: Jewish and Non-Jewish Women

Redecorating their "room" with a celebration of women's bodies and nature allows another type of identification important to feminists: connecting with all women, Jews and non-Jews, on a cross-cultural basis. Ziegler notes that, "Other ancient cultures have their own behavior patterns and customs around menstruation,"⁵⁶ and that "in several languages and cultures, the word for menstruation and the word for moon is identical."⁵⁷ Berrin draws on Eliade to discuss the symbolism of the moon, and on the practices of "Native Peoples."⁵⁸ Leah Novick extends this identification to women of the Biblical period, who were condemned by the Prophet Jeremiah: "His disapproval includes the details of baking cakes for 'the Queen of Heaven.'"⁵⁹ Lynn Gottlieb claims that baking these cakes was "a way of celebrating the renewal of the substance of life," celebrating the connection of the lunar cycle to both ancient Goddess worship and new moon ceremonies around the world.⁶⁰ The aim here is to affirm and legitimate the feminist Rosh Hodesh as a specific Jewish observance of a trans-cultural women's practice, just as the references to traditional Jewish texts aim to legitimate the feminist Rosh Hodesh as a Jewish practice.

I believe this multicultural perspective can also be associated to a discomfort with the traditional Jewish concept of chosenness. While God's special covenant with the people Israel is assumed in the messianic visions of the traditional *Kiddush Levannah* – as with virtually all traditional Jewish liturgy – the feminist Rosh Hodesh literature avoids this subject, implicitly agreeing with Plaskow's assessment "chosenness" must be replaced with the concept of "distinctness" in which Jews should affirm their "place among a multitude of peoples, all connected to and dependent on the earth."⁶¹

But while the emphasis on the physical body serves to legitimate women's spirituality as an embodied experience and practice, and connects Jewish women to all women, this also leads to certain problems which have not been adequately addressed in the feminist Rosh Hodesh literature. One of these is that most advocates of the feminist Rosh Hodesh actually affirm the traditional patriarchal Jewish view that women are closer to nature than men, but they revalue this as a moral and spiritual good. But the flip side of this view is an implied revaluing of Jewish men as more distant from nature than women, merely an inversion of the condemned patriarchal hierarchy. Of course, this is an issue for many non-Jewish feminists as well.

Another problem is in the area of feminism and gender theory, particularly, the debate about biological versus cultural sources of gender formation and identity. While this is a lively issue among scholars working on Judaism and gender such as Miriam Peskowitz, whose study of the Talmud begins with an "antessentialist move" that refuses to "tie gender to biological difference,"⁶² this debate has not had much impact on the theory or practice of feminist Rosh Hodesh.

Marcia Falk aims to avoid these difficulties in *The Book of Blessings: New Jewish Prayers for Daily Life, the Sabbath and the New Moon Festival*, her effort to compose a gender-neutral Jewish liturgy. Criticizing the use of all anthropomorphic images of the divine, whether male or female, Falk prefers to draw upon images of nature and minimizes gendered language as a way to express a non-hierarchical, non-dualistic relationship to divinity. The egalitarian and naturalistic style of the prayers in *The Book of Blessings*, as well as the prominence of Rosh Hodesh, clearly express a feminist commitment. Nevertheless, in contrast to most of the writing about the feminist Rosh Hodesh, Falk's liturgy is designed for use by both men and women. The challenge for its users is that it is not simply a shift in gender or replacement of a few words in an otherwise familiar liturgy; rather, it is a wholesale rewriting that necessitates a radical relearning, a tough goal to achieve in such a conservative area, as Falk herself recognizes.⁶³

Outside the Room: From Women's Bodies to Jewish Time

While men were the main performers of the traditional Rosh Hodesh observances, men have been written out of most feminist Rosh Hodesh practice that essentializes women's connection to the lunation. But one must ask: Is there not a danger that, having created a 'room of one's own,' the feminist movement within Judaism will be contained there, "a half holiday for women, a little something to keep us less unsatisfied," as Marge Piercy writes?⁶⁴ Isn't this something women can do because it has little impact beyond its confines and doesn't affect the "main" Jewish holidays and traditions, at most being part of "the Temple underground"?⁶⁵ By reinforcing women's difference, doesn't this only reinforce Judaism's patriarchal tendency to see women as "Other"?⁶⁶ Isn't there a danger that Rosh Hodesh will reaffirm women's marginality in Judaism rather than be a base for a thoroughgoing feminization, where women will be more than "honorary men"?

Falk's liturgy is one attempt to break out of these limns. Another example is the material gathered by the San Francisco Bureau of Jewish Education (BJE). While "women in particular have maintained a strong connection to Rosh Hodesh," the BJE *Rosh Hodesh: How To* pamphlet goes on to say that "today there is renewed interest in Rosh Hodesh among all segments of the Jewish community."⁶⁷ The elements of Rosh Hodesh that are emphasized in order to broaden its appeal are time and nature. This is especially well exemplified by Debbie Friedman's *Birkat Halvanah*. Like a number of Rosh Hodesh songs that emphasize the calendar, this song names all the months of the Jewish year, referring to the lunar cycle and the four seasons, and includes the refrain, "And we go round and round and round. And we go round and round."⁶⁸ Rosh Hodesh celebrates the cycle of months as the framework within which the sequence of annual holidays take place. The result is a heightened awareness of the seasonal dimension and naturalistic aspects of the annual holidays. Rosh Hodesh becomes a rhythmic framework for the year as a whole, a lattice of light and dark heightening an awareness of time itself.

Included Friedman's song is this wonderfully enigmatic passage:

A sliver, a quarter, a half, then full heart
Revealing the mysteries that set us apart.⁶⁹

What is revealed and who is set apart? These lines brilliantly evoke multiple visions of the meaning of Rosh Hodesh: a) a traditional Jewish interpretation where the Jewish people are mysteriously set apart by God; b) a feminist interpretation where women are set apart by the mystery of menstruation, of the life giving possibilities of their body; c) a post-modern interpretation that acknowledges and asserts a non-hierarchical difference of Jews from others, perhaps linking it to Jewish rhythms of time.

The multiple meanings of Friedman's song are matched by a the clever double entendre used by the San Francisco BJE in its Rosh Hodesh educational project, "It's About Time." On the one hand there is a feminist implication emphasizing the women's dimension of Rosh Hodesh: It's about time ... *that women had an equal place in Judaism*; or, It's about time ... *that we had a holiday of our own!* On the other hand there is a more general meaning: It's about time itself.

We invite you to study the meaning and message of Rosh Hodesh and to incorporate it into your life, to learn about the various cycles in Jewish life, and reflect on your relationship with time — how you use it, how you misuse it, and how the mere act of thinking about time can change your life.⁷⁰

Thus, activities are offered for both women and families, with the encouragement that while "most Rosh Hodesh groups have been formed by women for women ... there are Rosh Hodesh groups that include men, women, teens, and children."⁷¹

The BJE's effort reflects an attempt to expand the appeal of Rosh Hodesh from feminist Jewish women to the community as a whole by affirming Jewish difference via an emphasis on a uniquely Jewish experience of time, a "Jewish time." In the context of a world dominated by the Gregorian calendar, the emphasis on the Jewish year represents a movement of reappropriation and pride in a unique Jewish identity, a programmatic application of Hirsch's famous observation that the "catechism of the Jew consists of his [sic] calendar."⁷²

A renewed awareness of Jewish time can point the way to a renewed awareness of the Jewish relationship with nature. While the Talmudic rabbis made an effort to take control of the calendar away from the seemingly erratic cycle of the moon, Jewish time is still marked by moments observable in nature: the day begins at evening twilight, the month begins with the new moon, the holidays are connected to the seasons of the year. Cyclical, spiraling images are emphasized in contrast to the dominant linear

models of time embodied in the schematic months of the Gregorian calendar, digital watches, and Palm Pilots that schedule our lives.

Feminist Rosh Hodesh as Postmodern Ritual

The reinvention of Rosh Hodesh is part of an array of shifts in postmodern American Jewish life. In particular, the freedom with which the tradition has been modified reflects much more than feminism: it reflects a profound confidence, pride, and comfort level about being Jewish in general. These are the result of a number of generational changes that go relatively unremarked in the feminist Rosh Hodesh literature but have had an enormous impact: a) the establishment of the State of Israel; b) the Holocaust and its memorialization; c) the social, political, and cultural success and acceptance of Jews in the United States. Arnold Eisen notes that while these shifts are "massive," innovations in Jewish ritual also exhibit continuity with certain "ground rules of Emancipation [which] remain in force, eliciting a long-familiar and oft-practiced Jewish calculus of assimilation, acculturation, and distinctiveness."⁷³ We can see this process at work in the reinvention of Rosh Hodesh, illustrating Eisen's observation that:

... tradition, for the most part, continues to be 'reconstructed' and 'revalued' rather than discarded outright. Authority, for the most part, is still sought, kept at a distance, and self-consciously appropriated rather than accepted without question or forgone.⁷⁴

In particular, we can see how the new Rosh Hodesh fits "a set of five predictors for postmodern Jewish ritual performance" that Eisen postulates, and that its growth and success as ritual practice is due to the goodness of fit:

1) Politics: "A ritual will be observed to the degree that, and in the fashion in which, it establishes and reinforces the desired measure of inclusion in, and apartness from, the larger society."⁷⁵ The feminist Rosh Hodesh clearly aims to establish links to the larger society through connecting Jewish women to all women via biology and ecofeminism, yet maintains a separateness that affirms Jewish identity by (re)claiming a specifically Jewish holiday.

2) Symbolic Explanation: “‘Canonical’ messages proclaimed by the ritual – ‘eternal truths’ – will be universal and personalist rather than tribal, even if the ritual vehicle that ‘carries’ these truths is particularist and the ‘historical truth’ it recalls pertains specifically to Jews.”⁷⁶ The valorization of women and nature links the personal experience of menstruation to the experience of all women, while these are expressed through the particularity of Jewish culture. In addition, by grounding Rosh Hodesh in women’s bodily experience, nature is appealed to as a universal and authoritative source connecting women to Rosh Hodesh regardless of the level of their knowledge about Jewish religious life, texts, or language.

3) Nostalgia: “Rituals must wrap participants in memories of previous ancestral performances, linking present-day observers to the most private of spaces and in the place most identified by contemporary Americans with ‘who they really are,’ free from the public arena of role-playing and professional occupation.”⁷⁷ Rosh Hodesh usually takes place in intimate spaces, such as homes or the “‘Temple underground,’” where women can act as they wish, while the rituals assert connections to Jewish women ancestors and the familiar Jewish holidays.

4) Authority: “God’s presence in songs and blessings ... is in the postmodern period no longer a barrier and often an attraction – validating the quest and providing the assurance of transcendence.”⁷⁸ The transformation of God-imagery into Goddess-imagery is a critical element of the feminist Rosh Hodesh practice, asserting and allowing for a transformed relationship of women with the divine. The connection with Goddess is reached through an embodied spirituality that posits a physical yet subjective experience of connection with the rhythms of nature.

5) Tradition: “The ritual should be enshrined in the imagination as part of the tradition.”⁷⁹ The legitimization of Rosh Hodesh as a Jewish women’s holiday with an ancient lineage – from biblical marriages to readers of *tkhines* – is essential to making it “a ‘room of one’s own,’ a room that did not require leaving our homes within Judaism.”⁸⁰ The shift from masculine to feminine imagery is done using traditional Jewish terminology in order to provide a sense of Jewish continuity and legitimacy.

Conclusion

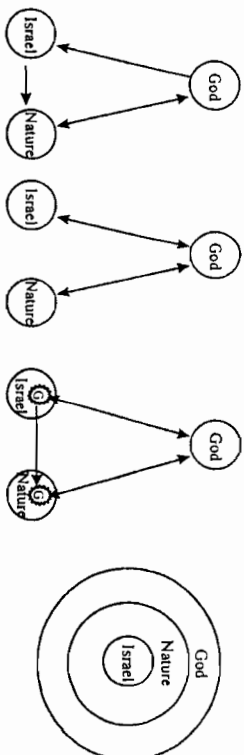


Figure 1: Varying Relations of God, Israel, and Nature in Rosh Hodesh Ritual

Conclusion

While Eisen’s criteria help us understand why the feminist Rosh Hodesh is successful, the actual cultural messages of the feminist Rosh Hodesh both reflect and project an ongoing postmodern feminist renegotiation of the relationships between the people Israel, God, and nature. While there is a danger in oversimplification, I have attempted to summarize and elucidate the foregoing discussion in Figure 1, which illustrates the shifting construction of the relationship of God, Israel, and nature in the Rosh Hodesh observance of various periods.⁸¹

- a) In the Biblical construction, a transcendent God is approached through nature via sacrifice: agricultural goods are offered up to God, who sends blessings down to nature and Israel.
- b) In the Talmudic and Contemporary Orthodox construction, a transcendent God is approached directly through prayer. Nature is an aspect of God’s creation with its own relationship to God, separate from humans and subject to human understanding.
- c) In the theurgical tradition of Kabbalah, God is both transcendent and immanent, with “sparks” of holiness animating all of creation. God is approached via *tikkun*-repair, which consists of the fulfillment of traditional commandments or more esoteric practices of

focus and meditation, part of which sees nature as a path towards God because it is animated by divine energy.

d) In the feminist construction, embeddedness replaces hierarchy: Israel (as well as all humanity) is part of Nature, which is part of God.

These diagrams are, at best, simplifications. To understand the specific renegotiations made by the feminist Rosh Hodesh, it is helpful briefly to consider each relationship in turn.

1) Israel and Nature: The calculated element of the Jewish calendar is de-emphasized while various forms of attunement to the cycles of nature reflected in the Jewish calendar are emphasized, in contrast to the Gregorian calendar. This brings culture closer to nature and implicitly raises nature's standing by emphasizing the echoes and emulations of nature in culture while asserting the embeddedness of culture in nature. While for the kabbalists nature was mainly a way to God, for Jewish feminists nature is a major site of God.

2) Nature and God: These are drawn closer together by the use of Goddess imagery. Nature is seen as a site for the embodied experience of divine energies, while the immanent spirituality of Shechinah, the Presence, is celebrated as a way to encounter a God who had become too remote, distant, and irrelevant in a technocratic culture. All of nature, including each body, becomes a local site and aspect of an infinite divinity. As Arthur Green wrote recently as part of an attempt to formulate "a Judaism unafraid to proclaim the holiness of the natural world... God and universe are related not primarily as Creator and creature, but as deep structure and surface."⁸²

3) Israel and God: The unique mytho-historic dimension of Israel's relationship with God is largely replaced by nature as a site of contact. My sense is that this is part of a wider struggle with theology in Judaism following the Holocaust, in which God is experienced as ineffective and distant. Thus, direct recourse to a transcendent God through prayer is replaced by experience through our bodies of an immanent God. But because this is founded in universally accessible nature, this connection is no longer covenantal and unique, but a specific cultural expression of universal truths, necessitating a replacement of "chosenness" with "distinctness," as Plaskow suggests.⁸³ The need to reformulate this chosenness is also necessary due to the reality of the State of Israel: the "ingathering of the ex-

iles" and Jewish sovereignty are no longer part of a mystical messianic future but a contemporary political reality – a reality which American Jews choose to support but not join. In contrast, neo-messianic movements in Israel are able to affirm both chosenness and nature through living in the Holy Land promised by God to the people Israel: while the land serves as a site of divine contact, their presence on it is considered proof of chosenness.

By recreating Rosh Hodesh as a 'room of one's own,' feminist Jewish women have made a place within Judaism that affirms a multitude of commitments. Both Jewish and feminist discourses are addressed because they are both seen as sources of authenticity and legitimacy in the identity of contemporary Jewish women. Indeed, many Jewish women alienated from the patriarchal character of traditional Judaism have found in Rosh Hodesh a framework through which they find a way back into Judaism. While the feminist Rosh Hodesh is only a small part of contemporary Jewish ritual performance and theological discourse, it does expose the problems and opportunities posed by one of the greatest changes taking place among American Jews in the current generation: the increased participation and power of women in all areas of Jewish life. In a broader sense, the changing rituals and understandings of Rosh Hodesh are examples of how Jewish cultural resources are reused, reshuffled, and remade in response to changing natural and cultural conditions.

Endnotes

1. This article is dedicated to my wife, Laura Binati Feldman, my inspiration and "informant" concerning feminist Rosh Hodesh practice. I also want to thank Arnold Eisen for his comments on an earlier draft.
2. Sometimes also transliterated as *Rosh Chodesh*, this literally means the "head of the month."
3. The Jewish day begins at sunset.
4. Linda Hirschhorn and Fran Avni, *Selections from Marcia Falki's Blessings in Song* (Berkeley: Half Note Productions, 1999), CD.
5. *Rosh Hodesh: How To* (San Francisco: Bureau of Jewish Education of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties, 1999), www.bjela.org.
6. Carol Diamant, ed. *Moonbenders: A Hadasah Rosh Hodesh Guide* (Woodstock, VT: Hadasah and Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000).
7. While I will be addressing discourses of authenticity and change, I begin from a perspective that there is not now, nor has there ever been, any one cultural configuration that can be refuted as "Judaism." Rather, I assume multiple Jewish cultures divided yet overlapping in a multitude of ways – such as geography, language, lineage, theology, ritual practice, gender, class – always evolving

in conflict and conversation, rearing and repairing, restoring and renewing.

8. There is a great deal written about the "Qumran Calendar," including the possibility that it was used as the calendar of the Temple cult during some periods. A good starting point is James C. VanderKam, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Measuring Time* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

9. *b. Roḥ Hashana 22b*.

10. *Ibid.*, 24a-25a.

11. Ephraim Jehudah Wisenberg, "Calendar," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 44-54, pp. 48-50. See also Ben Zion Wacholder and David B. Weisberg, "Visibility of the New Moon in Cuneiform and Rabbinic Sources," in *Essays on Jewish Chronology and Chronography* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1976), 59-74.

12. A brief summary of this is contained in Victor Hillel Reinstein, "Anticipating the New Moon: Birkat HaChodesh," in *Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology*, ed. Susan Berrin (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), 130-143. More extensive discussions of the Talmudic terminology can be found in W. M. Feldman, *Rabbinical Mathematics and Astronomy*, Fourth, Corrected Edition ed. (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1991) and Solomon Gandz, *Studies in Hebrew Astronomy and Mathematics*, ed. Shlomo Sternberg (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970).

13. There are echoes of this problem amongst Muslims today who continue to use an observational method similar to that described in the Talmud. See for example, Lisa M. Krige, "Moon Sighting Dispute Clouds Muslim Holiday," *Sun Jour Mercury News* (December 13, 2001): 1A, 14A.

14. The use of feminine and birthing imagery by the Talmudic rabbis when discussing the lunation and intercalation is quite notable and perhaps no surprise. Besides the relation of the moon to women's menses, both the moon and women were problematic for the rabbis, who saw them as unpredictable and unreliable. The rabbi's solution was to rhetorically bind and control both. For an analysis of rabbinic discourse aimed at controlling women see Miriam B. Peskowitz, *Spinning Feminists: Rabbin, Gender, and History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). I hope to more fully explore the connection between women and the gendered rabbinic terminology used in reference to the moon and calendrical issues in a future article.

15. *Somnino Chassis Collection: The Somnino Talmud, The Somnino Mishnah Rabbah, The Somnino Zohar, The Bible*. (Chicago: Davka Corporation, 1996). I have modified the translation to clarify the similarity and difference between the two adjacent passages.

16. See for example Zohar I, 181a-181b and 210a-210b, in Isaiah Tishby, ed. *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, III vols. (Washington: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994), 403 and 409. See also Arthur Green, "Bride, Spouse, Daughter: Images of the Feminine in Classical Jewish Sources," in *On Being a Jewish Feminist*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Schocken, 1995), 248-260.

17. Shifá Gold, "The Dark Rays of the Moon: Yom Kippur Karan as Preparation for Rosh Chodesh," in *Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology*, ed. Susan Berrin (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), 125-129.

18. Nosson Scherman, *Siddur Kol Yankov: The Complete Aronroll Siddur, Mivach Ahkhanaz*, Third ed. (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1990), 467.

19. *Ibid.*, 453.

20. *Ibid.*, 612.

21. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Pentateuch* (New York: Judaica Press, 1986), 250.

22. Nosson Scherman, *Siddur Kol Yankov*, 615.

23. *Ibid.*, 609.

24. *Ibid.*, 612.

25. *Ibid.*, 617.

26. Falk also notes the magical aspects of this ritual. Marcia Falk, *The Book of Blessings* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 506-507.

27. Alene Agus, "Examining Rosh Chodesh: An Analysis of the Holiday and Its Textual Sources," in *Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology*, ed. Susan Berrin (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), 3-12. For a collection of similar excerpts also see Carol Diamant, ed. *Moonbeams*, 4-11.

28. It seems likely to me that there were some women's "folk" practices already in place that elicited the explanation, legitimization, and cooperation found in the Talmud and *Pyke DeRabbi Eliezer*.

29. Agus, "Examining Rosh Chodesh," 4.

30. See for example the essays in Susannah Heschel, ed., *On Being a Jewish Feminist* (New York: Schocken, 1995); and Judith Plaskow, *Sanding Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990).

31. Agus "Examining Rosh Chodesh," 11; and Penina Adelman, "The Origins of Rosh Chodesh: A Midrash," in *Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology*, ed. Susan Berrin (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), 144-150.

32. Gedta-Rayzel Raphael, "Kiddush Halavama: Sanctifying the New Moon," in *Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology*, ed. Susan Berrin (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), 144-150, 147.

33. Agus, "Examining Rosh Chodesh," 9.

34. Quoted in Robin Zeigler, "My Body, My Self and Rosh Chodesh," in *Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology*, ed. Susan Berrin (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), 33-39, 34.

35. Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 46-47, 164.

36. Iliana Pades, *Counterradicals in the Bible: A Feminist Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 43-53.

37. Robin Zeigler, "My Body, My Self and Rosh Chodesh," 34-35.

38. Jane Liman, Judith Glass, and Simone Wallace, "Rosh Chodesh: A Feminist Critique and Reconstruction," in *Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology*, ed. Susan Berrin (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), 23-32.

39. Adelman, "The Origins of Rosh Chodesh."

40. Quoted in Jane Liman, Judith Glass, and Simone Wallace, "Rosh Chodesh: A Feminist Critique and Reconstruction," 28.

41. Penina V. Adelman, *Miriam's Well: Rituals for Jewish Women Around the Year*, Second ed. (New York: Biblio Press, 1990), 4. See also Rachel Adler, "The Jew Who Wasn't There: *Halakhah* and the Jewish Woman," in *On Being a Jewish Feminist*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Schocken, 1995), 12-18.

42. For more on this subject see Judith Hauptman, *Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 150, 164.

43. Penelope Slurte and Peter Redgrove, *The Wise Woman: Menstruation and Every Woman* (London: Paladin Grafton Books, 1986), 147, quoted in Robin Zeigler, "My Body, My Self and Rosh Chodesh," 37-38.

44. Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs*, 164.

45. Adelman, *Miriam's Well*, 2.

46. Raphael, "Kaddush Halevana," 146.
47. Susan Berrin, "Introduction," in *Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology*, ed. Susan Berrin (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), xxi-xxvii.
48. Marcia Falk's liturgy for Rosh Hodesh is designed for the precise evening and day of Rosh Hodesh. Marcia Falk, *The Book of Blessings*, 327-413.
49. Lynn Gortlieb, *She Who Dwells Within* (San Francisco: Harper/San Francisco, 1995), 135.
50. Arthur I. Waskow, "Feminist Judaism: Restoration of the Moon," in *On Bring a Jewish Feminist*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Schocken, 1995), 261-272.
51. *Ibid.*, 266-267.
52. Penina V. Adelman, *Miriam's Well*, 94.
53. *Ibid.*, Preface to the Second Edition, Note 2 (no page number).
54. Falk, *The Book of Blessings*, 422.
55. Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 104-5.
56. Zeigler, "My Body, My Self and Rosh Chodesh," 35.
57. *Ibid.*, 37.
58. Susan Berrin, "Introduction," in *Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology*, ed. Susan Berrin (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), xxi-xxvii, xxii, xxvii.
59. Leah Novick, "The History of Rosh Chodesh and Its Evolution as a Woman's Holiday," in *Celebrating the New Moon: A Rosh Chodesh Anthology*, ed. Susan Berrin (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1996), 13-22, 15.
60. Gortlieb, *She Who Dwells Within*, 137.
61. Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai*, 105, 133.
62. Miriam B. Reskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies: Rabbin, Gender, and History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 8-9.
63. See particularly the Introduction to the Commentary section, as well as the commentary to The Monthly Cycle in Marcia Falk, *The Book of Blessings*, 417-423, 494-510.
64. Quoted in Jane Litman, Judith Glass, and Simone Wallace, "Rosh Chodesh: A Feminist Critique and Reconstruction," 29.

65. A phrase coined by Laura Birah Feldman.
66. Adler, "The Jew Who Wasn't There,"
67. *Rosh Hodesh: How To*, 1.
68. Tamara Ruth Cohen Debbie Friedman, "Birkat Halevana" in *Debbie Friedman at Carnegie Hall (CD)*, ed. Debbie Friedman (Sounds Write Productions, 1995).
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Rosh Hodesh: How To*, 1.
71. *Ibid.*, 6.
72. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Judith: Sacred Essays From the Writings of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch*, trans. I. Grunfeld, vol. 1 (London: The Soncino Press, 1956), 3.
73. Arnold M. Eisen, *Rethinking Modern Judaism: Ritual, Commandment, Community* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 245.
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.*, 259.
76. *Ibid.*
77. *Ibid.*, 260.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Ibid.*, 261.
80. Atlene Agus, "Examining Rosh Chodesh," 4.
81. The figure does not address the issue of whether humans or nature are seen as closer to God; the focus is on the relation of nature to Israel as a path of relationship with God.
82. Arthur Green, "A Kabbalah for the Environmental Age," *Tikkun* 14, no. 5 (1999): 33-38.
83. Arnold Eisen has pointed out to me that the perspectives of both Green and Falk are quite Spinozist.
83. Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai*, 105.