

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*****SEXISM IS A SIN*****

Tishrei 5760 -- This week over 1500 members of the Jewish and mainstream press, Jewish communal "who's who" and synagogue and religious leadership received a decidedly different New Year's greeting in their mailboxes. Instead of standard apples-and-honey-sweet Rosh Hashana tidings, a card signed only with a cryptic "Jewish Women Watching" admonished the Jewish community for its transgressions against Jewish women. Thousands of readers of The Jewish Week and The Forward found similar messages in advertisements in the weeklies' Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur editions.

"Maimonides said that recognition of sin is the first step toward true repentance," proffered one member of the group who insisted upon anonymity. "These Days of Awe, and the days that follow, the Jewish community will no longer be able to deny or ignore such sins as the subjugation, exclusion, disrespect, alienation and non-acknowledgement of Jewish women.

"Consider this a public service," another member added. "We're issuing a thoughtful reminder that G-d is watching -- and She's pissed."

The beauty of the card, which has caused quite a stir in the religious and secular worlds alike, rests in its simplicity. The cover boasts an archival photograph of a turn-of-the-century woman identified by her sash as a Bat Zion (Daughter of Zion). The inside of the card reads:

Insure Your Place in the Book of Life.

"I would have liked to include a woman on that panel, but there wasn't anyone with enough stature."

****THIS YEAR CHOOSE A WOMAN KEYNOTE SPEAKER.****

"My organization's board is almost entirely male but we have no problem representing the Jewish community."

****THIS YEAR NOMINATE WOMEN TO YOUR BOARD.****

"We don't offer childcare. If women want families they are going to have to make career sacrifices."

****THIS YEAR SUPPORT WORKING PARENTS.****

"I'm sympathetic to women's issues, but be realistic. We can't afford to alienate anyone."

****THIS YEAR STOP ALIENATING WOMEN AND RECOGNIZE THAT WOMAN'S ISSUES ARE COMMUNITY ISSUES.****

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Jewish Women Watching

The back bears a chamsa (a hand with an eye on its palm), a traditional Jewish talisman, and the words "Jewish Women Watching."

So why the anonymity? "'Jewish Continuity' is considered far more urgent and important than 'women's issues,'" explained a group member whose tallis masked her identity. "We intend 5760 to be the year it's understood that the future of the Jewish people is contingent on the full and equal participation of Jewish women. By remaining anonymous, we are everywoman initiating this first step toward this goal."

There is no way to know where, when and how this renegade group of concerned women will strike again. However, it is most clear that, from this time forward, the Jewish community will be unable to conduct business as usual without impunity.

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