



Metro/Religion

Lieberman: Respect Women, Religion

By BRIGITTE GREENBERG
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—In accordance with Jewish law, vice presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman thanks God each morning for not having made him a slave or a woman.

In his Orthodox synagogue, Lieberman and his wife, Hadassah, must stand apart from each other as they pray. In counting the quorum to begin — called the minyan — Hadassah doesn't count; a quorum is 10 men. The daughter of a rabbi, Hadassah could never become one herself in the Orthodox tradition.

These are some of the differences in how women are treated in Orthodox Judaism compared with more liberal strains of the religion. And the disparity has some people asking if Lieberman's religion could color his views of women in secular society.

The senator from Connecticut doesn't defend all of his religion's traditions.

"Hadassah and I go to an Orthodox synagogue in both Washington and New Haven (Conn.) because that's sort of the tradition that we grew up with and it works for us, but look at my record in politics. By any standard, I believe it's fair to say that I've been supportive of women's

and not campaigning on Monday, Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement.

Mrs. Lieberman said they consider themselves more as "observant" Jews



than Orthodox. She seemed of two minds about how her religion regards women.

While saying she is comfortable with the role of women, she supports the views of one of Orthodoxy's leading feminists, Blu Greenberg, who prods Jewish leaders to allow women

like Blu Greenberg are out there fighting the battles, but they're not my battles to fight," Mrs. Lieberman said in a telephone interview. "It's really not for me to say anything negative."

Greenberg, president of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance and a longtime family friend, says that like many other families, the Liebermans are struggling to square some of their faith's teachings with modern life.

"Both Joe and Hadassah are in the same place as many other modern Orthodox Jews, which is that you stay within the system and you appreciate the blessings of the system, and you make certain trade-offs in some areas," said

Greenberg, who wrote, "On Women and Judaism: A View From Tradition."

Greenberg said she believes the senator looks beyond his religion to make decisions. She noted, for example, that while Orthodox Judaism allows abortion when a woman's life

rabbi, Barry Freundel of the Keshet Israel synagogue, disputes the idea that Orthodoxy discriminates against women. "You have to look at it through the eyes of Jewish law, which doesn't talk about rights. It talks about responsibilities," Freundel said.

Mrs. Lieberman said, "I don't think it makes Orthodoxy any less caring about women," and she noted that women who want to become rabbis have other options in the Reform and Conservative movements of Judaism. Said her husband: "I just would observe, without getting into the theological details, that there's change going on and there are also options."

He noted that their three adult children, Matthew, Rebecca and Ethan, all attend a more liberal synagogue of the conservative branch and "we worship with them some of the time."

Jeffrey S. Gurock, professor of American Jewish history at Yeshiva University, said that years ago women were forbidden to study sacred Jewish texts.

"Orthodox Jews of all stripes are producing a far more educated, learned group of women who are studying the same type of texts and sometimes with the same rigor as do their male counterparts, so that's a change," Gurock said.

recently had a bat mitzvah, a ceremony to demonstrate maturity by reading from the Torah — the word of God. Such a ceremony, common for boys, would have been unthinkable for a girl 50 years ago.

"We gave her an option. She could do it elsewhere if she wanted to do it. She chose to do it in an Orthodox synagogue," Mrs. Lieberman said. "She's a very independent little kid."

Gurock said the different gender roles are a product of 2,000-year-old traditions. "The question is to what extent do you want to accommodate

yourself socially to the world around you while maintaining a degree of fidelity to Jewish tradition," Gurock said.

For Letty Cottin Pogrebin, a founding editor of Ms. magazine, making accommodations is part of the problem. "There's no such thing as separate but equal," said Pogrebin, who wrote "Deborah, Golda and Me: Being Female and Jewish in America."

Lieberman said, "My own vision of the effect of my religion on my attitude toward women is that it has taught me to not only respect but to treat women at least equally," he said.

Interfaith Network For Earth Receives Award

The Ralph L. Smith Foundation has awarded Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns \$9,000 to support INEC's work in environmental justice, food sustainability, Portland metro livability, and global warming education and advocacy.

"The timing couldn't be better," said INEC director Jenny Holmes, noting two upcoming events that will

enhance INEC's ongoing work in global warming and in food security. The first, a training for clergy at Silver Falls State Park, Oct. 29-30, will bring together religious leaders from over 25 faith groups to learn ways they can empower their congregations to both act and advocate to slow global warming. The other event, INEC's fourth annual A Place at the Table conference on November 3 and 4, will bring

together people with varied roles in creating a region where people have access to fresh, nutritious food and where natural resources are sustained. The founding will also support INEC's ongoing work in environmental justice,

which has included advocacy for the creation of an environmental stewardship plan as well as ecumenical dialogues on the future of the Columbia River basin. Other INEC work supported by the grant includes an ongoing collaboration with

the Coalition for a Livable Future and other groups to help the faith community, educational institutions, governmental groups, and nonprofits work together to create a more livable Portland metro region.

Workshop Offers Insights Into Refugee Struggles

Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees (SOAR), the refugee resettlement program of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO), will host a workshop on refugee resettlement called The Compassionate Missionary on Monday, October 23, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., at Savage Memorial Presbyterian Church, 1740 SE 139th Street, Portland.

The workshop will inform pastors and other congregational members of the benefits of and need for refugee sponsorship. Presenters will include representatives of the Church World Service (CWS) national office in New York, SOAR staff, local church sponsors, and refugees resettled in the Portland area.

Attendees will hear from refugees who are building new lives in the Portland area, reports from local churches describing their experiences of hospitality to refu-

gees, a review of U.S. foreign policy and global issues involving refugees and other uprooted people, and a discussion about what sponsorship entails and how churches can organize for sponsorship. Continental breakfast and lunch will be served to all participants.

"For decades people of faith have led the way in welcoming people from other countries into our communities," said David Leslie, EMO executive director.

"This workshop provides an opportunity for churches to learn about the challenges that refugees face and to find out how they can help."

To register or to learn more about The Compassionate Missionary, contact Peter Ilyin, SOAR sponsorship coordinator, at (503) 284-3002.

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