

# BookMarks

*Women's League for Conservative Judaism*  
Fall 2016

## A WOMEN'S LEAGUE CENTURY OF READING

### Introduction

In this issue of **BookMarks**, leading into the Women's League centennial celebrations, we are focusing on celebrated books, game changing books, memorable books... books that our women have been reading since our founding in 1918. What were the important or influential books of the 1930s and '60s and 2014? What about these books made them popular bestsellers?

We have selected a book for each decade, a book that captured the imagination and interests of the women of the time. The selections include novels about women's struggles for autonomy, historical fiction, a diary, even a cookbook. The list is our own, from the members of the Women's League Program Activities Team. You might ask, *why that one and not this one?* Those are good questions, but we could only choose ten. Hopefully this list will generate much lively discussion and lead to the rediscovery of fabulous books from years past.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of BookMarks. We look forward to hearing from you with your comments, suggestions and questions. May our next hundred years of books be as memorable as the past hundred years.

Janet Kirschner, *Books Chair*  
Ellen Kaner Bresnick, *PAT Chair (Program Activities Team)*  
Lisa Kogen, *Director Education/Program*

#### In this issue:

- What makes a book a game changer?
- The Women's League own selections
- Interviews with authors Anita Diamant and Maggie Anton
- Response to *Lean-In* by Sheryl Sandberg, a year after losing her husband and becoming a single mother
- Programmatic suggestions

#### What are your game changing books?

Let us know which books you would have chosen as the most influential, game-changing title of any of the past 10 decades. Send the decade, title and author to Janet Kirschner at [jkirschner@wlcj.org](mailto:jkirschner@wlcj.org). We will post your choices on Women's League Reads and Facebook.

# A CENTURY OF READING

## Independence, Eggplant Tortillas and Sex

Lisa Kogen

There is no single formula for predicting a book's success. What makes a book popular? From the author's point of view, it is a combination of a good product and good luck.

From the reader's point of view, appeal is totally subjective and not necessarily predictable. And the reasons that women read are subject to factors that change decade to decade, even from year to year. Some read to escape, some to be educated, some for spiritual uplift, and some for pure entertainment (and some, a combination of all). And while reading used to be a solitary activity, the growing popularity of book clubs has changed even that. Now reading is a communal activity.

But when considering *what* books women read, we are on more solid ground. We have numbers for that, and numbers rarely lie.

So as Women's League approaches its centennial anniversary, we are devoting this edition of **BookMarks** to some of the most popular books read by Jewish women – bestsellers written either by female Jewish authors or with a Jewish theme, sometimes both. Decade by decade beginning in 1918, the books reflect a wide spectrum of subjects, interests and social agendas.

There is a quantifiable connection between a book's popularity and a large female readership. Contemporary publishers discuss quite openly that the predominant demographic for fiction is women, disproportionately Jewish women.

What is it that attracts women, and in our case, Jewish women, to these books?

A number of these works are thinly veiled social commentary on the marginalized role of women.

In our first selection, immigrant writer Anzia Yeziarska, in her groundbreaking novel *Bread Givers* (1925), offers a vivid narrative of intergenerational conflict centering around themes of assimilation, religion and the role of women. Subtitled "a struggle between a father of the old world and a daughter of the new," *Bread Givers* recounts 17-year-old Sara Smolinsky's efforts to break away from her tyrannical father who maintains that "God doesn't listen to women ... women can [only] get into heaven because they are wives and daughters of men." Yeziarska's novel challenged traditional gender prescriptions, especially those of young women who

wanted to leave behind their ghetto heritage and the religious observance.

Fanny Hurst advanced Yeziarska's critique on contemporary social restrictions in her enormously successful *Imitation of Life* (1933). Two single mothers, one white, one African American, raise their daughters together and create an international restaurant empire. Bea Pullman and Deliah Johnson are models of women's social and economic aspirations, women fighting for self determination and independence. *Imitation of Life* exploring issues of race, gender and class in early 20th century America, sold millions of copies and was made into a movie, first in the '30s and then in the 1950s.

By the time *Marjorie Morningstar* hit the bestseller list in 1955 Jewish women had achieved long sought middle class status, and their aspirations reflected their social status. In Wouk's novel, the now archetypal middle class Marjorie experiences a post-war transformation from young, ambitious, emancipated Jewish girl into a conventional suburban matron, a "Shirley." The once audacious free spirit now wants nothing more than to become a sisterhood president. No longer tilting at social windmills of rebellion, Marjorie Morningstar's acquiescence to social norms was shared by millions of women.

Rona Jaffe's first novel, *The Best of Everything* (1958), captured the zeitgeist of 1950's young women on their own, unencumbered by husbands and vacuum cleaners, living fantasy lives of independent working women. But their lives and expectations were tempered by the notion that this time was merely a stopgap before marriage and fulfillment. Singlehood is good for a while.

These aspirations to become the middle class suburban housewives, however, were soon to be challenged by works of two feminists a half century apart. In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan questions the hollowness of socially prescribed women's lives and their much vaunted status. Fifty years later, in *Lean-In* (2013), Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, offers an even more vocal advocacy for women's leadership aspirations in the highest precincts of corporate power.

The issue of women's status – while it undergoes social change and a wide variety of expression – nevertheless remains as important at the end of a hundred years of reading, as it was at the beginning.

Other popular works reflect a heightened public acknowledgment of Jewish identity. *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1947), discovered and published by her father after the war, was the first, and perhaps the most enduring testimonials to the Holocaust. The Holocaust was not discussed publicly in the post war years. It was a conversation behind closed doors (if at all), in hushed voices. *The Diary of Anne Frank* brought the Holocaust into the open, and has engendered a cottage industry of books, films, plays, and publication in dozens of languages. Similarly, Leon Uris' historical novel *Exodus* (1958), a romanticized narrative about the establishment of the State of Israel, played a significant role in heightening public awareness of recent history, encouraging a new-found public expression of Jewish pride. The film version of *Exodus*, featuring Paul Newman as the central hero, cemented Jewish heroism in the Jewish public imagination.

Historical fiction is another genre that has captured women's interest, and, with the rapid acceleration of book groups, an ever expanding demographic audience. Anita Diamant's *The Red Tent* (1997) Maggie Anton's *Rashi's Daughters* (2007) altered the terrain of reading. Both novels used snippets of stories from classical Jewish texts to offer engaging and accessible fictionalized accounts of women's lives in ancient and medieval times.

By giving expression to women's voices and experiences when there was little record of their lives, Diamant and Anton were hailed as agents of discovery. Their characters are not merely foils for men, but they even create their communities of women empowered by their own wisdom and skills. To a certain extent, this genre of literature has demystified the Bible, midrash and Talmud, making them accessible.

Finally, lest we think that women's concerns run only to fiction, we focus on two other areas: the kitchen and the bedroom. Mollie Katzen's groundbreaking *The Moosewood Cookbook* (1974), reflects the 1970's revolutionary health food agenda. Her recipes offer alternatives to traditional Jewish foods with varied ethnic cuisines and vegetable-laden ingredients. And finally, *Dr. Ruth's Guide to Good Sex* (1983), nipping at the heels of the sexual revolution, offers women sage, practical, and unembarrassed advice about their sexual lives. Her most extraordinary non-clinical descriptions of sexual behavior read as matter-of-fact and straight forward as a home decorating how-to manual. Sex was no longer relegated to titillating novels that women hid under their mattresses. Dr. Ruth gave voice to a subject that was often (and she maintains, mostly) not discussed even between partners, let alone on Johnny Carson.

So that is a century of reading. Tell us what you think.

## Reading through the Decades

### Our Selections: Who is in? Who is out?

The process of selecting these books was difficult. How to decide what to include, what to exclude? Most of the book selections were best selling works, which immediately confirmed their popularity.

Our first criteria, generally, was that the writer be female and Jewish. As a women's organization we believe that we need to support women writers who are often overlooked, even today.

The inclusion of *Marjorie Morningstar* and *Exodus*, both written by men, are exceptions because both were read by millions of readers. The readership of *Marjorie Morningstar* was mostly women. Both of these books are mentioned on all Jewish book lists as "ground-breaking" novels. *Marjorie Morningstar*, even today, is often mentioned by women as one of their favorite or most memorable books.

To remain true to our commitment to women authors, for the two decades featuring works by male authors, we also selected alternate works by women, Rona Jaffe (*The Best of Everything*) and Betty Friedan (*The Feminine Mystique*), both groundbreaking works as well.

While there are many others that might make it into this selection, *Portnoy's Complaint*, *The Source*, *Showboat*, *Giant*, *My Life: Golda Meir, From Beirut to Jerusalem*, there were only 10 slots so we selected those books that we felt spoke principally to women's interests and issues.

# The Women's League Book Selections

## 1917-2017

### 1917-1927

#### ***Bread Givers*, Anzia Yeziarska, 1925**

Young immigrant, Sara Smolinsky lives in a tenement in New York with her parents and older sisters. The women struggle to eke out a mere existence while the Torah scholar father studies all day. Conflict arises when Sara rebels against her father's expectations and attitudes about gender and piety.

### 1928-1937

#### ***Imitation of Life*, Fannie Hurst, 1933**

In the 1930s, Bea and her African American maid, Delilah, raise their daughters together and create an international restaurant empire. Bea is focused on building her business, and challenges social convention to marry (and settle down) and Delilah is devastated when her light skinned daughter moves away to pass as white. Each woman grapples with social conventions and prescriptions of race, gender and class.

### 1938-1947

#### ***Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, Anne Frank, 1947**

Anne Frank was 13 when her family moved into the secret annex in an Amsterdam office building where they would spend the next two years. In the pages of her diary, writing and even re-writing her entries, she grows into a young woman and an insightful observer of human nature. The current translation restores about 30% of the diary omitted by Anne's father, Otto Frank, when he published it. The added entries include details about Anne's emerging sexuality and confrontations with her mother.

### 1948-1957

#### ***Marjorie Morningstar*, Herman Wouk, 1955**

On the face of it, *Marjorie Morningstar* is a romantic story of a Jewish teenager who dreams of becoming an actress and falls in love with a charismatic summer camp director Noel Airman. Their turbulent relationship is doomed. Noel's barb that Marjorie is really just a "Shirley" – a bourgeois suburban housewife – comes to pass, and both remain fixed and unchanging, clinging to old habits and values. Women enthusiastically embraced Wouk's brittle social commentary.

### 1958-1967

#### ***Exodus*, Leon Uris, 1958**

This fictionalized account of the founding of the State of Israel was one of the most popular Jewish bestsellers

ever. The novel views history through the eyes of one family – moving back and forth between the Holocaust, the British occupation of Palestine, and Israel's 1948 war of independence. The book addressed both the fantasies and prejudices of American Jews emerging from decades of mistrust and prejudice in the anti-immigrant atmosphere of mid-century America. It was nearly as common to find a copy of *Exodus* in American-Jewish households as to find the Bible, and of the two, not a few apparently had only *Exodus*.

#### ***The Best of Everything*, Rona Jaffe, 1958**

Five young employees of a New York publishing company, touchingly – and sometimes hilariously – struggle in the city. Like their 21st century successors of *Sex and the City*, each is an archetype of the aspirational young working woman. Ivy League Caroline dreams of graduating from the typing pool to an editor's office; naïve country girl April reinvents herself as the woman every man wants on his arm; and Gregg, the free-spirited actress secretly yearns for domesticity.

#### ***The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan, 1963**

Betty Friedan gave a pitch-perfect description of "the problem that has no name" – the insidious beliefs and institutions that undermined women's confidence in their intellectual capabilities and kept them in the home. Writing at a time when the average woman married in her teens and 60% of female students dropped out of college to marry, the author captured the frustrations and thwarted ambitions of a generation and showed women how they could reclaim their lives. Part social chronicle, part manifesto, *The Feminine Mystique* is filled with fascinating anecdotes and interviews as well as insights that continue to inspire. The book was, and remains, one of the primary texts of Second Wave Feminism.

### 1968-1977

#### ***The Moosewood Cookbook*, Mollie Katzen, 1974**

Mollie Katzen hand-wrote, illustrated and locally published a spiral-bound notebook of recipes for vegetarian dishes inspired by those she and fellow cooks served at their small restaurant co-op in Ithaca, NY. She introduced millions to a more healthful, natural way of cooking.

**1978-1987**

**Dr. Ruth's Guide to Good Sex, Ruth Westheimer, 1983**

Dr. Westheimer offers wisdom, compassion, and information in this ultimate guidebook to sexual fulfillment. Here, she covers the basics – healthy sexual function and feelings – and the not-so-basic – sex and pregnancy, sex for the elderly, gay sex, treatment for sexual dysfunction, and more.

**1988-1997**

**The Red Tent, Anita Diamant, 1997**

In this fictionalized account of a scantily sketched biblical story – modern midrash to be certain – Jacob's daughter Dinah tells her story, in her own voice. It begins in the insular world of her mothers, Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Bilhah, Jacob's four wives, who love her. They bestow on her gifts to sustain her through a damaged youth, a calling to midwifery, and a new home in a foreign land. The title refers to the tent in which women must, according to ancient law, take refuge while menstruating or giving birth, and in which they find mutual support and encouragement from their mothers, sisters and aunts. Diamant's vibrant community of women appealed to millions of readers, creating a "Red Tent" social frenzy.

**1998-2007**

**Rashi's Daughters: Book I: Joheved, Maggie Anton, 2007**

The first in Anton's trilogy creates a world of knowledgeable Jewish women in the middle ages. Using medieval texts – Talmud and responsa literature – Anton weaves fiction and history into a credible and riveting story. In 1068, the scholar Rabbi Salomon ben Isaac (Rashi) returns to France to take over the family business and begin writing his first Talmud commentary. He also secretly teaches his daughters, and Joheved, the eldest, is spiritually and intellectually awakened by her studies. Knowing the social and communal risks to participating in this male-centric activity, she keeps her passion for learning and prayer hidden. When she becomes betrothed she must choose between marital happiness and her love of Talmud.

**2008-2017**

**Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead, Sheryl Sandberg, 2013**

The author, COO of Facebook, fuses humorous personal anecdotes, singular lessons on confidence and leadership, and practical advice for women based on research, data, her own experiences, and the experiences of women of all ages.

*To tell the truth she was quite thrilled to be working at the very source of a magazine which helped build up much of her present misinformation.*

Rona Jaffe  
*The Best of Everything*

*You are in Palestine now, and never again do you have to lower your head or know fear for being a Jew.*

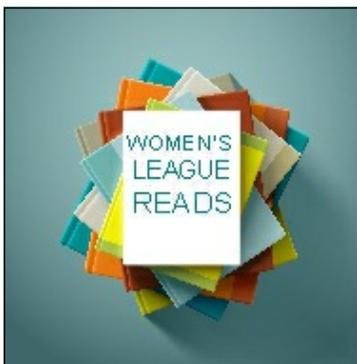
Leon Uris  
*Exodus*

*The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night -she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question- "Is this all?"*

Betty Friedan  
*The Feminine Mystique*

*"Mollie Katzen's highly regarded cookbooks feature meatless recipes and fresh produce, and give the feeling of visiting in the kitchen with a warm, witty, well-informed friend. Yet in the millions of kitchens where her tabini-stained books hold a hallowed place on the shelf, Ms. Katzen is the exemplar of a healthful cooking style that has no dogma and offers no apologies."*

*(New York Times review of The Moosewood Cookbook)*



**WOMEN'S LEAGUE READS ONLINE BOOK GROUP** The newest initiative from Women's League! A world-wide conversation about books of interest to today's Jewish women. Special bonus: a conversation with the author. To enroll, send [lsilverman@wlcj.org](mailto:lsilverman@wlcj.org) your name, email, and sisterhood, or let us know that you are an Individual Member of Women's League (not through a sisterhood).

**THE BOOKCORNER** Look at the Women's League website ([www.wlcj.org](http://www.wlcj.org)) for a growing list of new titles for your reading pleasure.

## Q & A with Anita Diamant

Author of *The Red Tent*

### **What motivated you to write *The Red Tent*?**

After more than 20 years writing non-fiction, I needed a challenge. I decided to try writing a novel.

### **Why this particular story?**

I didn't have a story in my back pocket, so I decided to "borrow" one from the great cultural treasure chest of stories that is the bible. At first I thought I'd write the story of Rachel and Leah and their complicated relationships with Jacob and each other. But I found Dinah's silence compelling and her story incomplete. There was a mystery: what happened in Shechem?

### **What was your process for writing? How did you do the research?**

My research focused on the everyday life of women in the ancient Near East. I consulted rabbinic sources very little and concentrated instead on the food, clothing, social organization, architecture, and medicine of the era, ca. 1500 BCE.

I was the recipient of a fellowship at Radcliffe College at the Schlesinger Library on the History of American Women. During my year as a visiting scholar of the Brandeis Hadassah Institute, I had access to the Brandeis library system. I wandered in the stacks (this is before the internet was much of a resource) and found bits and pieces that allowed me to imagine the lives of those women.

### **In which genre would you put *The Red Tent* ?**

Historical fiction.

### **Were you surprised by its extraordinary popularity?**

I certainly was! No one can predict how a book will be received by readers. Its success was due, in large part, thanks to reading groups and independent bookstores, which made it a word-of-mouth bestseller. To me, that is the highest compliment.

### **What do you think accounts for its popularity?**

For women readers of the bible (both Jewish and Christian) it fills in the silences that surround so many of its female characters. For others, the celebration of women's strength and agency is the draw. Midwives, nurses and OB/GYNs say the portrayal of childbirth affirmed their work and wisdom.

### **What about the critics of *The Red Tent*? What were their concerns?**

I did not think about criticism in advance; that is a sure-fire way to never finish a book. Some people objected to the liberties I took with the biblical story, but it was never my intention simply to retell the text. As it states on the cover, *The Red Tent* is "a novel."

### **As you approach the book's 20th anniversary, how do you see its place as historical fiction?**

I don't think that I, as the author, am in a position to answer that question. It's up to readers and, not to be pretentious, to history to make that determination. However, I do think *The Red Tent* inspired other writers to explore biblical characters and stories, but this was part of a larger interest in historical themes in fiction.

## Q & A with Maggie Anton

Author of *Rashi's Daughters*

### **How did you get interested in *Rashi's daughters*?**

I began studying Talmud with a group of women after my children grew up. The more I studied Talmud from a feminist perspective, the more curious I became about Rashi's learned daughters and how they managed to study Talmud when such study was supposedly forbidden.

### **Why was Talmud study forbidden for women?**

This question deserves more than the brief answer I'll give here. In Deuteronomy, Jews are commanded to teach Torah to *bnaichem*, a word usually translated as *your children*. But the early rabbis used its literal meaning, *your sons*, and decided that only men were obligated to study

Torah. The Talmudic sage Rav Eliezer took this exemption one step further, and declared that "he who teaches his daughter Torah, teaches her lechery."

### **What were the consequences for women who studied Talmud?**

All societies disapprove of those who don't follow their norms. Women who wanted to study were seen as lacking in proper feminine attributes, and because women were thought to be light-headed, incapable of serious study, those who tried to study Talmud would only learn to be crafty and devious. Since a man supposedly

believed that he was more intelligent than his wife, the learned woman had a limited choice of husbands.

**What were the most interesting things you learned from your research?**

The Shabbat lights blessing was based on the Chanukah lights blessing, not vice versa, and that in Rashi's time, this blessing was the basis of a great controversy that wasn't settled until years after his death. Also, Jewish women in Rashi's time were able to demand a divorce from their husbands, while a man couldn't divorce his wife without her consent.

**Were there any surprises?**

I was surprised to learn that there was little anti-Semitism in Rashi's time - the Church was more interested in converting pagans and going after its own heretic sects than in persecuting the Jews. Ghettos and

blood-libels came centuries later. Also, Jews lived prosperous lives (even the poorest had servants) and engaged in many occupations (Rashi was a vintner for example). Some Jews were feudal lords and very few Jews supported themselves by money-lending.

**What do you see as the legacy Rashi's daughters leave for modern women?**

Rashi's daughters recognized the value of Torah study, and they wanted an education for themselves as well as for their husbands and sons. Like women today, they attended synagogue regularly and performed those rituals usually reserved for men. When modern Jewish women create new rituals and new blessings, we are following in the footsteps of Rashi's daughters and doing what our female ancestors were doing 900 years ago.

## **Game-Changing the Jewish-American Woman's Psyche** *Ellen Kaner Bresnick*

In order to create a more level societal playing field, many of the Jewish American writers of the past century took it upon themselves to serve as the standard bearers of their generation, the game-changers, carrying new ideas into the forefront of social change and development. The many American Jewish women who read their words saw these proponents of change as visionaries who influenced how the world thought about racism, feminism, individualism, and scholarship.

Jewish women readers in the United States, in particular, saw value in trying to solve problems like poverty and discrimination through different voices and varied genres. For some, social commentaries reiterated the struggles of the under-represented in society to break into the workplace, while sentimental romances, historical fiction, and satire engaged with key dilemmas in a non-threatening manner.

Game-changer books were relevant and topical about current events. For example, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* catalyzed the passing of legislation to protect migrant farm workers. Leon Uris' *Exodus* struck a chord with Jewish readers for whom both the horror

of the Holocaust and the formation of the State of Israel were still fresh in their minds. The book showed the world that the Jews had survived in spite of everything.

Up until the 1960s, many of the game-changer books were written by men despite the fact that early 20th century Jewish American women writers felt obliged to speak for the women around them. As the women's movement evolved in the '60s and '70s, more women found their places on lists of game-changer books. *The Feminine Mystique*, in particular, became a touchstone of the women's movement and heralded a significant change in the role of women writers.

Finally, during the latter half of the 20th century and the early part of the 21st, many game-changer books have stayed within the purview of American-Jewish literature as they continue to present overtly Jewish themes and create ways in which readers explore Jewish identity. For Jewish American women, these works serve as a lens through which we respond to stereotypes of Jewish women as well as to the new Jewish woman, whoever she may be.

*"Meir is the study partner? What about me?" Jocheved shot her father a hurt look, and he responded by patting his belly and gently shaking his head..."*

*Maggie Anton  
Rashi's Daughters: Jocheved*

## By Sheryl Sandberg

*On May 6, 2015, Sheryl Sandberg posted on Facebook this poignant response to what she wrote in Lean-In, Challenging women to have it all, with – of course – the help from a loving spouse*

*This is an excerpt from her post ....*

On Mother's Day, we celebrate all moms. This year I am thinking especially of the many mothers across the country and the world who are raising children on their own.

People become single parents for many reasons: loss of a partner, breakdown of a relationship, by choice. One year and five days ago I joined them.

For me, this is still a new and unfamiliar world. Before, I did not quite get it. I did not really get how hard it is to succeed at work when you are overwhelmed at home. How often situations would come up that Dave and I had never talked about and that I did not know how to handle on my own.

I never understood how often the world would remind my children and me of what we don't have – from father-daughter dances to Parent Night at school.

For many single mothers, this is the only world they know. Each and every day they make sacrifices, push through barriers, and nurture beautiful families despite the demands on their time and energy.

I realize how extremely fortunate I am not to face the financial burdens so many single mothers and widows face. Poverty is one of the hidden and devastating aftereffects of loss for women.

I am also lucky that I have close family and friends who have done so much to support me and my children. ... In *Lean In*, I emphasized how critical a loving and supportive partner can be for women both professionally and personally – and how important Dave was to my career and to our children's development. I still believe this. Some people felt that I did not spend enough time writing about the difficulties women face when they have an unsupportive partner or no partner at all. They were right.

I will never experience and understand all of the challenges most single moms face, but I understand a lot more than I did a year ago. Our widespread cultural assumption that every child lives with a two-parent heterosexual married couple is out of date. Since the early 1970s, the number of single mothers in the United States has nearly doubled. Today, almost 30 percent of families with children are headed by a single parent, and 84 percent of those are led by a single mother. And yet our attitudes and our policies do not reflect this shift.

Single moms have been leaning in for a long time – out of necessity and a desire to provide the best possible opportunities for their children.

On Mother's Day, I want to celebrate ... single mothers to recognize that the world does not make it easy for them, especially for those who struggle to make ends meet. Forty percent of families headed by a single mother in the United States live in poverty, compared to just 22 percent of families headed by a single father and 8 percent of married couple families.

For many single parents, there is no safety net. Single mothers experience food insecurity, and many single mothers have more than one job—and that does not count the job of taking care of their children. A missed paycheck or an illness can present impossible choices.

The United States is the only developed economy in the world that does not provide paid maternity leave. Almost a third of working mothers don't have access to any kind of paid leave to care for themselves or their families if someone gets sick.

We need to rethink our public and corporate workforce policies and broaden our understanding of what a family is and looks like. We need to build a world where families are embraced and supported and loved no matter how they fit together.

Being a mother is the most important – and most humbling – job I've ever had. As we rightly celebrate motherhood, we should give special thanks to the women who are raising children on their own. And let's vow to do more to support them, every day.

Preparation time:  
20 to 30 minutes

## CARROT SOUP VARIATIONS

Yield: 6 to 8  
servings



Each of the following Carrot Soup Variations is a thick, creamy purée that can be made with no dairy products. Each soup also keeps and freezes very well, and doesn't suffer from repeated reheatings.

### Gingered Carrot Soup

Serve this as a thick sauce over rice for a simple supper. It also goes well with Samosas (p.170) and Raita (p.99).

2 lbs. carrots	¼ tsp. each: cumin
4 cups water	ground fennel
1 Tbs. butter or oil	cinnamon
1½ cups chopped onion	allspice
2 medium cloves garlic, minced	dried mint
2 Tbs. freshly grated ginger	
1½ tsp. salt	3 to 4 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
	1 cup lightly toasted cashews
	OPTIONAL: buttermilk, to drizzle on top

1) Peel and trim carrots, and cut them into 1-inch chunks. Place in a medium-large saucepan with the water, cover, and bring to a boil. Lower the heat, and simmer until very tender (about 10 to 15 minutes, depending on the size of the carrot pieces).

2) Meanwhile heat the butter or oil in a small skillet. Add onions, and sauté over medium heat for about 5 minutes. Add garlic, ginger, salt, and spices. Turn heat to low, and continue to sauté for another 8 to 10 minutes, or until everything is well mingled and the onions are very soft. Stir in lemon juice.

3) Use a food processor or blender to purée everything together (including the toasted cashews). You will need to do this in several batches. Transfer the purée to a kettle, and heat gently just before serving. If desired, pass a small pitcher of buttermilk, for individual drizzlings.

22 SOUPS

*I can shake off everything if I write; my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn. But, and that is the greatest question, will I ever be able to write anything great, will I ever become a journalist or a writer? I hope so, oh, I hope so very much, for I can recapture everything when I write, my thoughts, my ideas and my fantasies.*

Anne Frank  
*The Diary of a Young Girl*

*The more a daughter knows about the details of her mother's life - without flinching or whining - the stronger the daughter.*

Anita Diamant  
*The Red Tent*

*The promise of equality is not the same as true equality."*

Sheryl Sandberg  
*Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*

*Be involved! Go to concerts, performances, lectures--events of interest. Women have to take the risk of being the one to start a relationship, to say to a man 'would you like to go for a coffee.' If the answer is 'no,' go on to the next one."*

Dr. Ruth Westheimer  
*Guide to Good Sex*

*"How do you tell a child that she was born to be hurt?"*

Fannie Hurst  
*Imitation of Life*

*This door was life. It was air. The bottom starting-point of becoming a person. I simply must have this room with the shut door.*

Anzia Yezierska  
*The Breadgivers*

*But Marjorie had little use for any version of the faith. She regarded it as a body of superstitious foolishness perpetuated, and to some degree invented, by her mother for her harassment.*

Herman Wouk  
*Marjorie Morningstar*

# Programs! Programs! Programs!

Here are some great programming suggestions using our game-changing list of books. The programs are fun, inexpensive and easy to plan, perfect for a cold winter night.

Book review or discussion on any of the 12 centennial books

Questions you may want to ask:

- Is this a game-changer book?
- Why did it make the Women's League list?
- In what ways did the book change you when you read it?
- What is the significance of the title?
- What differences did you notice in your understanding of the book when you read it originally versus current reading?
- Discuss the evolution of the main character in the book. Do you think she or he accurately represents the time period in which the book is set?

Cooking demo of Moosewood Cookbook recipes

Progressive dinner featuring recipes that reflect the era of some of the books (go house to house or hold this at the synagogue)

Movie night on one of the movies (*The Imitation of Life*, *Diary of Anne Frank*, *Marjorie Morningstar*, *Exodus*, *The Best of Everything* and *The Red Tent* TV Miniseries)

Questions you may want to ask:

- What obvious differences do you notice between the book and the movie?
- What subtle differences do you notice between the two?
- Why do you think these changes were made?
- Compare and contrast the character portrayal between the book and the movie.
- Which worked better for you, the book or the movie?

Meal from Moosewood combined with book or movie discussion (Choose recipes that personify an element of the book or movie.)

Themed meal together with book discussion, ie. Dutch food with Anne Frank. Participants bring in and discuss artifacts, mementoes, meaningful objects, fashions, etc. that reflect one of the books.

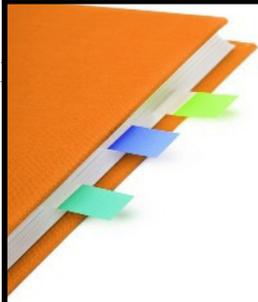
Social action project: Put together a selection of these books for homebound or ill members.

Synagogue library lending shelf containing these books.

Public library features Women's League for Conservative Judaism 100 years of reading (contact your local

Book review or discussion on issues raised by game-changer books. (After reading *Anne Frank*, read other Holocaust books. After reading *The Red Tent*, read other micrashic stories, ie. *The Secret Chord* by Geraldine Brooks).

Rosh Chodesh program featuring discussion of game-changer books, i.e. subject of feminism covering *The Feminine Mystique*, *Lean In*, *Imitation of Life* and *The Red Tent*.



**BookMarks**  
WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR  
CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

475 Riverside Drive, Suite 820  
New York, New York 10115

phone: 212.870.1260  
Email: [womensleague@wlcj.org](mailto:womensleague@wlcj.org)  
website: [www.wlcj.org](http://www.wlcj.org)

Carol S. Simon, *President*  
Janet Coleman Kirschner, *Books Chair*  
Ellen Kaner Bresnick, *PAT Chair*  
Lisa Kogen, *Education/Program Director*  
Rhonda Jacobs Kahn, *Communications Director*  
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