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## IN THE BEGINNING



### LIP SERVICE

Egypt has to be the model of something more than an ice-cold peace.

*Seymour Reich, former president of the American Zionist Movement, after U.S. Jewish leaders met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.*



## WOMEN INTERNS

### Changing Spirit In Riverdale

Ask Karen Miller why the initial hoopla faded so quickly and a slow, ponderous smile spreads across her face. Miller, recently named the second congregational intern at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale — and the world's third — really can't say why only two New York synagogues have created these posts.

"Yeah, you know, I wonder that myself. I don't think it's so controversial," says Miller, 24.

"I don't see that women are going to be called rabbis in the Orthodox community, but that key parts of the rabbi role will be played by women leaders, such as education and deciding halacha."

The role of congregational intern, introduced a year and a half ago as a way to offer women spiritual positions in Orthodox synagogues, was greeted with much enthusiasm by Orthodox feminists and the press, but has yet to catch on outside of the Hebrew Institute and Lincoln Square Synagogue on the Upper West Side.

For her part, Miller, whose idea of fun is discussing Midrash with friends — "It was the Jewish equivalent of a book club," she says of a Tuesday night group she started last year — brings different skills to the post than her Hebrew Institute predecessor, Sharona Margolin Halickman. Halickman, recently promoted to a more permanent position, is

known for her gentle touch in pastoral counseling rather than deep insights into the parsha of the week.

"My interest really lies in there being intense, advanced level learning for women by women," says Miller, a Drisha scholar who this fall begins a doctoral program in rabbinic literature at New York University. The Stern College graduate studied 2 1/2 years in Israel.

As a congregational intern, among other duties, Miller hopes to serve as a liaison between the rabbi and the women congregants, acting as a female confidante on personal matters related to Jewish law. She also would like to direct one night of women's learning at the synagogue's beit midrash.

Miller also plans to give *divrei Torah* at the learner's minyan and would like to lead monthly sessions with the women's prayer group on halachic issues such as contraception and *agunah*, a woman whose husband will not give her a *get*.

"Her skills are probably teaching and learning," says Rabbi David Silber, founder and dean of Drisha, of Miller. "You only have X hours in the day, but the synagogue is intelligent enough to know" how to use her strengths.

Elicia Brown



**Karen Miller, recently named congregational intern.** MICHAEL DATIKASH