

## From Feminists Plan New Parley

**FORWARD STAFF**  
NEW YORK — Organizers are hurrying to pull together the next International Conference on Feminism and Orthodoxy, to take place in New York City on February 15-16.

The gathering, to be held at the Grand Hyatt, represents a reprise of the historic conference held last February, the first of its kind, during which more than 1,000 women swamped proceedings set up to accommodate 450. The earlier conference was widely considered to have tapped into a groundswell of feminist feeling in Orthodox communities around the world. It was also aided by the decision several weeks before the gathering of an influential rabbinical body, the Vaad Harabonim of Queens, to outlaw women's prayer groups. The law women's prayer groups, which, organizers say, are conducted so as not to breach the boundaries of *halacha*, or Jewish law, are attended by thousands of Orthodox women; a consortium of the groups was among the conference's sponsors.

"We weren't going to have another conference for two years, but we

had so many requests to have it sooner that we just had to," said organizer Blu Greenberg. "We tried to get many new voices this time."

Sessions will focus on issues concerning single women, reclaiming a mother's name in ceremony and text, the laws of *tzniut* (modesty), *halachic* innovation in the marriage ceremony, converts into Orthodoxy, women's *tefilla*, women's obligations to pray and the *halachic* status of the *agunah* issue, among other topics. Presenters include scholars Malka Binah, Chana Henkin, Devorah Steinmetz and Norma Joseph, Rabbi Irving Greenberg, Saul Berman, Avi Weiss, Haskel Lookstein, Emanuel Rackman, David Silber, Adam Mintz and Daniel Sperber, and activists Rivka Haut, Suri Kassirer, Batsheva Marcus, Leah Shakdiel, Susan Aranoff and Honey Rackman, among others.

The conference's sponsors are the Women's Tefilla Network; Edah, a group that promotes Modern Orthodoxy; the Ohr Torah Institutions of Israel; Matan, an Israeli institute for women's Torah learning; and Drisha, a Torah learning center for women in New York. ■