



Gratz Insider, July 2012 - Story Continuation

[To return to the newsletter, close this page.]

### **Alumna Rabbi Lynnda Targan Comes Full Circle at Gratz**

*Funny You Don't Look Like a Rabbi* - no, it's not the punch line to a joke, but rather the title of an upcoming book, particularly well-suited to Rabbi Lynnda Targan, the author of this work-in-progress. Rabbi Targan's coiffed hair, meticulous makeup and fashionable apparel may defy the stereotype of a bearded male Talmudic scholar. However, her spiritual connection to Judaism and her scholarly appreciation of its texts unequivocally validate her career choice.

This choice was not made lightly though. Rabbi Targan was ordained after she had already raised a family and run her own public relations business. Her ascent into the rabbinate was an evolutionary journey, beginning with her adult bat mitzvah in 1983, and ending with her rabbinical ordination on the very same date - twenty years later.

Reflecting back on this journey, Rabbi Targan recalls the nagging feeling that had repeatedly haunted her: "I had so much, and yet, I felt a bit hollow. I felt like I wasn't meeting my potential. I felt like I was spiritually unfulfilled."

The turning point in her journey was a life-changing Federation mission trip to Poland. After this trip, she stepped up her involvement with local Jewish agencies and, for five years, crafted the service for Philadelphia's annual Holocaust remembrance ceremony. She also immersed herself in learning, first in Religious Studies at Temple University, and then, at Gratz, where she earned two master's degrees, graduated *summa cum laude* and delivered the valedictory speech. She also spent time during the summer studying in Israel.

As Targan was about to embark on her rabbinical training at the Academy for Jewish Religion in New York, a rabbi told her, "You only go to rabbinical school when you can't do anything else." Momentarily surprised, Targan soon realized

what the rabbi had meant. There is a fervor that drives future rabbis: they do it because they can't *imagine* themselves doing anything else.

It is a sentiment that, years later, Rabbi Targan still feels. Although a member of Old York Road Temple - Beth Am, Rabbi Targan is not a congregational rabbi. Instead, she calls herself a community rabbi, who officiates at major life-cycle events, such as baby namings, bar/bat mitzvahs, weddings, funerals and unveilings. For people experiencing life challenges, she also provides spiritual healing, which she describes as an "evolving corpus of liturgy." She writes original meditations and prayers, including one that is read at Ground Zero memorial services.

With this range of rabbinic functions, Rabbi Targan explains that her "goal is to bring Jewish wisdom to the spiritual landscape." In other words, at her core, she is a teacher. "Everything I do is a teachable moment," she says, "even at a wedding when I'm under the chuppah." Whether it's teaching at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y in New York, co-founding the Women's Midrash Institute, or serving as the spiritual leader on a mission trip to Israel and Germany, teaching is her passion.

And she has brought this passion to Gratz College, where she has come full circle, from student to teacher. For about seven years, Rabbi Targan has been teaching adult education courses at Gratz. She has taught writing workshops and courses with intriguing titles, such as "The Pursuit of Happiness" and "What I Did for Love: Love, Lust and Longing in the Jewish Tradition."

Teacher, rabbi, writer, wife, mother and grandmother - Rabbi Targan has a very full life, imbued with the spirit of Judaism. "Judaism teaches you how to live in blessing and gratitude," she explains. "If you follow the teachings of Judaism, it is a very rich life." And it seems that Rabbi Targan is leading life according to her own advice.