

## Where's Hillary?

Two Hassidic Brooklyn publications removed Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and White House staffer Audrey Tomason from the iconic photo of US leaders watching the raid of Osama bin Laden's home on May 1.

The newspaper *Der Tzitung* and the weekly magazine *De Voce* shadowed out the two female figures, leaving only the men in the room.

The alteration was first reported by a blogger on Failed Messiah, a Web site the covers the Orthodox community.

In an apology, *Der Tzitung* said its policy is not to print photos of women, for reasons of modesty. It said it did not read the fine print forbidding alteration of the photograph.

# Berkshires woman becomes second 'rabba'

By Elise Kigner

Advocate Staff

When Kaya Stern-Kaufman is ordained this week, her certificate will look different from those of newly minted rabbis across the country. It will include the English title rabbi and the Hebrew title rabba.

Stern-Kaufman, who is being ordained by the pluralistic Academy of Jewish Religion in Riverdale, N.Y., will become the second woman in the United States to be given the title rabba. She is following the lead of Rabba Sara Hurwitz of the Orthodox Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

Stern-Kaufman, who lives in Great Barrington with her husband and two teenage children, said she expects people will call her rabbi most of the time. But when she is addressed in Hebrew, such as when she is called up to read from the Torah, she would like to be called rabba, rather than the Hebrew rav.

"For me, given my background coming from a rabbinic family, rav conveys a masculine identity in the same way that mister conveys a masculine identity," said Stern-Kaufman, whose grandfather was a seventh generation Orthodox rabbi.

Some members of last year's ordination class asked the school to bestow them with the title rabba after Hurwitz was given that title in January. Instead of making a decision right away, Ora Horn Prouser, dean of the 55-year-old academy, said staff spent a year studying the matter.

Throughout the year she spoke with non-Orthodox rabbinical schools in the United States, but found that none was even considering giving out the title rabba.

She did find, though, that it was a hot topic in Israel. She noted that last year the Academy of Hebrew Language in Israel accepted the word rabba as part of the Hebrew language. "Rabba is an up and coming title in Israel for liberal women rabbis," she said. "Anyone I talked to in Israel said oh yes, I know rabba so and so."

She said the school decided to give people the choice of taking on the title rabba, as doing so was in line with its pluralism.

Stern-Kaufman, 47, was the only one of



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**Kaya Stern-Kaufman**

the seven women in her ordination class to take on the title rabba. She emphasized that the choice was personal. She noted that many students in her school want the title rabbi because it signifies their equality with their male counterparts.

Stern-Kaufman, who calls herself a pluralist instead of identifying with a denomination, said she was inspired by Hurwitz, though she is well aware of the differences in their respective communities.

Beyond sharing a title and both being ordained in Riverdale, the two rabbas have little in common. Stern-Kaufman will be ordained in a class of seven women and five men. Hurwitz is working in a denomination where many do not believe women

should be rabbis.

After Rabbi Avi Weiss of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale ordained Hurwitz with the title maharat in June 2009, and then changed her title to rabba last January, the two were rebuked by both the traditional and modern Orthodox leaders. As a result, Weiss is no longer giving out the title rabba.

While Hurwitz's new title sparked the discussion at the Academy of Jewish Religion, Prouser said Hurwitz's experiences had little to do with the school's decision to give out the title rabba.

"We did not look at this decision as supporting or rejecting what she did," Prouser said. "We focused more on liberal movements, and, if anything, it was all the controversy surrounding Rabba Hurwitz's being given that title last year that kept us from wanting to enter those waters until things had settled down."

Rabbi Elaine Zecher, the first female rabbi in Temple Israel of Boston's 153-year-old history, said she does not think Stern-Kaufman's title will be "controversial or a big deal."

"There are people who take on different titles as a religious leader, rebbe, reb. There are multiple titles out there," she said. "If she enters into the professional world, she will have to decide what that name represents to her and what assumptions people will make."

Even as Stern-Kaufman's feminized title has put her in the spotlight, her plans as a rabbi do not center on women's issues. A social worker and a feng shui consultant before deciding to become a rabbi, she intends to focus on outreach to unaffiliated Jews and bridging the denominations of Judaism. She is also interested in synagogue architecture.

Stern-Kaufman, who now volunteers as a chaplain at Fairview Hospital in Great Barrington, is a founder and member of the traditional egalitarian Berkshire Minyan.

She likened herself to Hurwitz in that both are "standing up for the right of Jewish women to be spiritual leaders in their communities."

The Jewish Advocate online

## Online debate

May poll question:

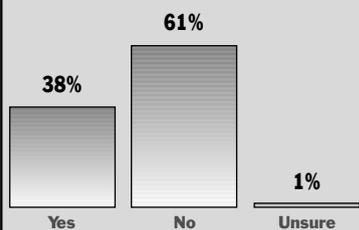
*Fatah, the ruling party on the West Bank, has apparently reconciled with Hamas, which rules Gaza. What should Israel do?:*

- A. Refuse to participate in further peace talks.
- B. Await signs that Hamas is moderating.
- C. Forget about any hopes for a two-state solution.
- D. See how the United States reacts.

Tell us what you think at [www.TheJewishAdvocate.com](http://www.TheJewishAdvocate.com)

## April Poll Results

Should the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston keep J Street as a member organization?



## Close-knit group



Joshua Freier, a 12-year-old Oak Hill Middle School student, visits EPOCH Assisted Living at Boylston Place every Thursday, where he has joined the knitting club to make hats for patients at Massachusetts General Hospital. The hats are Freier's bar mitzvah project. His fellow knitters at the Chestnut Hill nursing home have already received invitations to the June celebration.

## Holocaust Museum honors Elie Wiesel

Elie Wiesel is receiving the inaugural United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Award May 16.

Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, Nobel Peace Prize winner and Boston University professor, will receive the award for his contributions to Holocaust remembrance and humanity. Wiesel is the museum's founding chairman.

The award will be given out annually to recognize those who advance the museum's vision of a world where people confront hatred, prevent genocide and promote human dignity.

## THE JEWISH ADVOCATE

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