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2014 Main Event "Bringing Shalom into Your Home" with Rabbi Shmuley Boteach

It's not too late to purchase the hottest tickets in town – those for the Jewish Federation's 2014 Main Event featuring Rabbi Shmuley Boteach!

The event will take place on Thursday, December 12 at 7:30 PM at Temple Israel. The Main Event is the Jewish Federation's single largest campaign event of

the season.

"A big thank you to our Friends of Shmuley event patrons. Our patron list is growing everyday. We're thrilled that so many com-

munity members have stepped up to support the event at the \$180 level," said co-chairs Amy Augustine and Alison Lerner. "Friends of Shmuley" receive two Main

Event tickets, one signed book and recognition in the event program, the January *Charlotte Jewish News* and on Federation's website.



Main Event co-chairs Alison Lerner and Amy Augustine.

General admission tickets are \$36 per person and can be purchased online at www.jewishcharlotte.org; by calling 704-944-6757 or by mailing in your

check to Jewish Federation, 5007 Providence Road, Suite 101, Charlotte, NC 28226.

This year's Main Event speaker Rabbi Shmuley Boteach hosted the national TV Show "Shalom in the Home," and is described as "America's Rabbi." Called "the most famous Rabbi in America" by *The Washington Post* and *Newsweek*, he is one of the world's leading experts on relationships, values, and spirituality. His 29 books have been best-sellers all over the world and have been translated into 20 languages. Rabbi Shmuley has lectured and appeared in print, radio, and TV all over the globe. Please visit www.shmuley.com/home to learn more about Rabbi Shmuley Boteach.

At the event, community members will have an opportunity to pledge to the 2014 Annual Campaign. Generous support from members of our caring and compassionate community will bene-

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My Morning at the Western Wall

By Andrea Cooper/Tablet Magazine

"Did they pay you to come here?" one wide-eyed Orthodox girl asked us, curious about the women in tallit all around her.

No one had to pay the hundreds of women—including me—who sang and celebrated this morning at the Kotel for Women of the Wall's 25th anniversary prayer service. Our group stretched through much of the women's section and spilled onto the plaza on a clear morning that was filled with unexpected light, both from what happened and what didn't.

I'll confess I didn't sleep a second last night, imagining the possibilities. A senior Haredi rabbi had asked ultra-Orthodox girls to come early and fill up the women's section. Would they scream at us, curse, or spit, as has happened at previous Women of the Wall services? Would men lob eggs in our direction from the other side of the *mechitza*? Good for the hair or not, I wasn't thrilled about the thought of viscous substances landing on me at a holy place.

None of that materialized. A small row of men shouted to make their displeasure known when we first arrived. (In a lovely bit of irony, we were singing "Hineh Ma Tov," a song about unity.) It was also hard to miss the morning prayers blasted from the men's side over a loudspeaker aimed in our direction. But the women, who had no microphones, just sang their own prayers louder. According to *Haaretz*, police forced the men to shut off the loudspeakers; by the time the Women of the Wall service officially began, it was quiet. I also heard that police set up a barricade next to the *mechitza* on the men's side to put some distance between protestors and those being protested. If so, it must have worked. Even the occasional whistle meant to disrupt us seemed half-hearted.

That left room for the joys. Among them:

* Every woman around me had a story about what brought her to this service. One woman wore a tallit belonging to a friend who had hoped to be here but passed away just weeks ago. Another said kaddish during the service for her feminist mother, on the anniversary of her death. Another had names inscribed on her tallit of those who supported this journey and were here in spirit.

* A few very religious girls and women not part of our group prayed with us or asked questions. To be sure, most of the ultra-Orthodox worshipped next to the Kotel, and female soldiers stood between us and them to protect everyone. But a few newcomers joined us, including the teen who said she was sorry about what Women of the Wall had endured here in the past. As for the girl who asked my rabbi if we had received payment to hold a protest service, I'm idealistic enough to believe that questions and conversation can lead to change for the better.

* Four women raised Torah mantles because we couldn't bring a Torah into the women's section. One was Rabbi Laura Geller, ordained more than 30 years ago as the third female rabbi in the Reform movement and active with Women of the Wall since its inception. Once, she had her tallit confiscated at the Wall. This morning, she lifted a velvet Torah mantle like a banner of hope.

* Young girls in the group were blessed with a tallit held high above them. Someday, they might have their bat mitzvahs at the Wall.

After the service, many of the Americans gathered at Robinson's Arch, the site proposed for a new egalitarian space at the Western Wall. We prayed for peace and acknowledged how far we had come for this spiritual moment. I thought back to a new prayer I'd just learned at the Kotel:

"May no woman or girl be silenced ever again among Your people Israel or in all the world." ☆

This article is reprinted from Tablet Magazine, at tablet-mag.com, the online magazine of Jewish news, ideas, and culture.

Andrea Cooper is a member of Temple Beth El, and a writer based in North Carolina. She has written for *Time*, *Salon.com*, *Utne Reader*, *Pacific Standard*, *National Geographic Traveler*, and *Vogue*, and has contributed to NPR's *All Things Considered*.

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