



# Kolot Expands and Redesigns Web Site on Rituals

By Gari Julius Weilbacher

**The Talmud** says every person must say 100 blessings a day, implying that there ought to be a blessing for each of life's significant occasions. Until recently, however, there were no blessings for women when they got pregnant, had miscarriages, gave birth or weaned babies. Nor were there any blessings for individuals when they moved, got married, sent children off to college or saw grandchildren for the first time.

Indeed, the last few decades have seen an upsurge in creating, re-creating and adapting Jewish ritual. Even so, many Jews still had no idea how to get access to these innovations. Jewish women's organizations such as Kolot, RRC's Center for Jewish Women's and Gender Studies, still had to respond individually to many phone calls from people who wanted a baby-naming ceremony, had questions about their new Miriam's Cup for the Seder table, or needed help developing a commitment ceremony.

To address that issue, Kolot has launched a revamped, expanded and enriched version of its Web site, [Ritualwell.org](http://Ritualwell.org), the most extensive and unique Web site of contemporary Jewish rituals ever



“We created this Web site to make innovations in Judaism widely available and accessible to everyone—to Jewish professionals as well as individuals and families who are experimenting with ways to celebrate holidays and honor life-cycle passages,” says Lori Lefkovitz, Ph.D., director of Kolot and executive editor of the Web site. “Ritualwell.org is also a way for people to share ceremonies and prayers. Ritual and prayer help people maintain a healthy perspective on life and encourage us to live more meaningfully.”

Ritualwell.org is both interactive and responsive. If it is daytime in the visitor’s location, the page appears in sunny daylight colors; if it is nighttime, the screen shows a starry night sky. Visitors who are interested in knowing when the sun sets for candle lighting can click on graphic depictions of candles that adjust to the time zone in their own location. The home page shows secular and Hebrew dates, as well as graphic representations of the current phase of the moon.

And the site is inclusive: In addition to providing traditional

prayers, Ritualwell.org invites visitors to submit their own rituals, deepening their connection to Judaism and to others. Submissions have included rituals for aging Baby Boomers and a meditation for radiation therapy. Individuals can register on the site and save documents in a private folder, as they cut and paste to personalize their own rituals or handouts.

Many individuals have supported the development of the site. In particular, Kolot acknowledges generous grants from the Pat Barr Fund, the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, and the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation.

“Kolot is proud to make this remarkable and beautiful resource available to users around the world,” Lefkovitz says. “We are gratified by the warmth of people’s response to the materials we have collected and posted, and we hope that Ritualwell.org will help people find comfort, hope and joy through Jewish religious practice. We look forward to gathering and sharing even more material from the growing Ritualwell.org community.”

