



# Rabbi Cohen's

## Shabbat Message



**“Gender equality is not a women's issue: It's a human one.” – Emma Watson**

From the Women’s Suffrage Movement in the nineteenth century led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Supreme Court Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the women’s movement has seen countless achievements. Nevertheless, there is still so much more work to be done.

**Today is International Women’s Day—a day to recommit ourselves to building a gender-balanced world, but where do we even start?**

### **ISRAEL**

Today, in Israel, the multi-denominational prayer group Women of the Wall commemorated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary by holding a *Rosh Chodesh* prayer service at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, as they do every month. Unfortunately, they were met by protests from Ultra-Orthodox men and women. For thirty years, Women of the Wall and its international supporters have been striving for gender equality and religious pluralism in Israel. The group strives for the Four T’s: *Tefillah* (to pray out loud), *Tallit* (to wear a prayer shawl), *Tefillin* (to wear phylacteries), and *Torah* (to be able to read from the scroll) all at the Western Wall. The prayer group hopes for the day when Israel will accept that there is more than one way to be Jewish and permits full, active participation of women in Jewish life, in the public sphere.

### **AMERICA**

Today, in America, the struggle for gender equality can best be found in the workforce. Whether it is being heard in the boardroom, gaining pay equity, procuring paid family leave or the obtaining of leadership roles, there are still many areas in need of gender balance. Roles primarily occupied by one gender create susceptibilities for discrimination and harassment. Our current events celebrate the record high number of women elected into the United States Congress and NASA’s first all-female spacewalk that is scheduled for this month. Still, we must strive for the day when it is just the accomplishments of these individuals that are being commended and not the gender breakthrough. **There is more work to be done. The good news is that anyone can be an ally for gender equality.**

### **TAKE ACTION**

Here are some steps we can all take:

- Truly listen to all the perspectives around you
- Bolster the voices of those who may be ignored
- Give credit where credit is due
- Call out behavior that may be inappropriate
- Respect women’s boundaries
- End gender-based jokes, which only normalize stereotypes and inequities
- Be respectful to use proper titles—be it Doctor, Professor, Judge, Officer, Pastor and Rabbi, to name a few
- If you are unsure of what may be appropriate, just ask!

**Last but not least, remember that being an ally is not a one-time role, but an ongoing responsibility.** America's first, female rabbi, Rabbi Sally Priesand, once wrote that the "the best way to assure that... recognition of women is more than symbolic is to bring women into leadership roles on the national as well as the congregational level, to turn our resolutions of the past decade into reality, to translate our *words into deeds*."<sup>1</sup> She knew that real change did not come by just identifying concerns and setting goals but by implementing a plan and following through with it. **May we pledge to hold our words and intentions accountable so that they too are transformed into deeds.**

**Tonight, join us at 7:30pm as the Sisterhood leads us in prayer.**

**Only together, can we achieve a world with gender equality. #BalanceforBetter**

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Cohen

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