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### **Ultra-Orthodox Israeli Women and their Reproductive Lives An Online Conversation, December 7**

NEW BRUNSWICK/PISCATAWAY, N.J. – Ultra-Orthodox women are known to adhere to strict societal roles and religious tenets. But according to new research by Michal Raucher, assistant professor of Jewish Studies at Rutgers University, these women challenge the male and religious structural hierarchies when making decisions about their reproductive lives.

Raucher will discuss her findings with journalist Avital Chizhik-Goldschmidt, whose essays, including a recent piece in the *Forward* on Orthodox women and abortion, often analyze the intersection of religious devotion, gender, and individualism. Raucher will draw on her new book *Conceiving Agency: Reproductive Authority among Haredi Women* (Indiana University Press, 2020), which offers a new view of ultra-Orthodox Israeli women. According to Raucher these women insist on autonomy and control when they make decisions regarding the use of contraceptives, prenatal testing, fetal ultrasounds, and other reproductive practices—even while contending with interference from doctors, rabbis, and the Israeli government.

This online program will be held December 7 at 7:00 p.m. on the Zoom platform. It is free and open to the public. Advance registration is required on the Bildner Center website: [BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu](http://BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu). The event is presented by the Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life at Rutgers University with support from the Sagner Family Foundation.

Dr. Raucher's research lies at the intersection of Israel studies, religious ethics, and the anthropology of women in Judaism. As a Fulbright Fellow, she conducted ethnographic research on reproductive ethics of Haredi Jewish women in Israel, and she has received grants from the Wenner Gren Foundation for anthropological research, the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, and the Crown Family Foundation.

Avital Chizhik-Goldschmidt is the Life editor at the *Forward* and was previously a reporter for *Haaretz*. Her essays have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Vox*, and *Salon*, among others. Chizhak-Goldschmidt has taught journalism at Yeshiva University's Stern College for

Women, and does pastoral work with her husband, Rabbi Benjamin Goldschmidt, on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

The Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life connects the university with the community through public lectures, symposia, Jewish communal initiatives, cultural events, and teacher training.