

Leila Gal Berner, who currently teaches as Scholar-in-Residence in the Philosophy Department, is trained in medieval Jewish history with a specialization in the Jews of Spain. An ordained rabbi, academic interests lie in the areas of Jewish feminism, life cycle spirituality, biblical exegesis and contemplative spirituality. Dr. Berner is currently exploring contemplative spirituality and its intersection with Jewish readings of biblical text and is preparing a book entitled *Reading the Torah in Our Lives: A Contemplative Entry into the Hebrew Bible*. In the past few years at American University, Dr. Berner has taught a course on *Modern Jewish Philosophers, Women and Judaism*, and *How Jews Read the Bible*. In Fall, 2009, she will be teaching a course on *Jewish Views of Death, Dying and the Afterlife*. Dr. Berner continues to serve as a congregational rabbi and spiritual director.

A Fulbright scholar, Rabbi Leila Gal Berner, PhD, has spent expensive time in Spain researching Jews during the Spanish *Reconquista*.

Ordained at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Rabbi Berner currently serves *Kol Ami: The Northern Virginia Reconstructionist Community* in Arlington. The Founding Director of the Center for Jewish Ethics at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Rabbi Berner has recently founded and is Director of *Lev Tahor: A Center for Jewish Soulwork*, in Bethesda, Maryland.

Dr. Berner has taught at Reed and Swarthmore Colleges and at Emory University. Rabbi Berner has published widely on the creation of new feminist rituals and is a pioneer in the unfolding field of contemplative Jewish engagement with the Hebrew Bible.

Since 1967, Dr. Berner has also been very active in interfaith dialogue. A citizen of the United States and Israel, Dr. Berner, through her academic and rabbinic work, has participated actively in Israeli-Palestinian peace-making efforts.