



National Council of Jewish Women

**SUGGESTED READING FROM NCJW FOR INTERNATIONAL AGUNOT DAY
FAST OF ESTHER, FEBRUARY 25, 2010**

Thousands of Jewish women, all over the world are being denied the basic right of divorce by a system of Jewish Law that allows only a husband to initiate divorce proceedings. In Israel, because of the absence of religion/state separation, there is only the *Halachic*, Jewish legal, option available to couples seeking marriage or divorce. Moreover, any woman who desires a Jewish divorce, a *get*, and is denied one by her husband is given the status of *Agunah*, and lacks any civil legal recourse. The National Council of Jewish Women sees the withholding of a Jewish divorce as a serious violation of a woman's freedom. The deprivation of the choice to liberate oneself from a marriage is an affront to individual rights and freedom. The right to divorce as well as the right to marry should be a choice made by equal partners. On the Eve of Purim, when we celebrate Queen Esther and her courageous and powerful actions on behalf of her Jewish community, we urge all community leaders to take action and speak out against this violation of human rights. We, as Queen Esther did so long ago, seek the right of all Jews to live free of oppression.

We raise our voices

In the name of our sisters, the Agunot

Who suffer in chains

Which bind them to unwanted marriages

We raise our voices

In the name of our sisters, the Agunot

With compassion and love

When love and compassion had fled their homes

We raise our voices

In the name of our sisters, the Agunot

When we call on the judges of Israel

To rule against oppression

We raise our voices

In the name of our sisters, the Agunot

When we call upon the Rabbis

To use their power for good alone

We raise our voices

In the name of our sisters, the Agunot

To call for freedom from tyranny

In the spirit of our tradition's respect for human rights

We call for action

In the name of our sisters, the Agunot

To profess NCJW's tradition of Jewish values

Through education, advocacy, and the pursuit of equality, justice and tikkun olam