

ORA | אורה

FREEING AGUNOT. PREVENTING ABUSE.

IMPACT REPORT 2020

A FORMER AGUNAH SHARES HER STORY

Page 4

ORA BY THE NUMBERS

Page 5

WHY I GIVE

Page 7

Messages from our CEO and Board President

Dear ORA Community,

There's no question about it: this was certainly a year to remember. From the anti-Semitic attacks that rocked our community in the fall to the coronavirus pandemic and the national conversation about race happening now, this has been a challenging time for all of us. It has now been nearly half a year since our lives have been profoundly disrupted, and as time marches on, maintaining our optimism is increasingly challenging. Interestingly, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks offers a powerful differentiation between optimism and hope: "Optimism is the belief that things are going to get better. Hope is the belief that we can make things better."¹

At ORA, our team has worked to find new ways to operate as an organization, maintaining our staff culture from a distance and finding creative workarounds for the many situations complicated by the pandemic. From the women who are quarantined at home with abusers to those trying to leave with nowhere to go, to the agunot whose pursuit of a get has been disrupted, Covid-19 has deeply impacted the population we serve at ORA. Agunot have always been vulnerable; now, they need our support more than ever.

Despite these many challenges, there is hope, and we also have numerous accomplishments to celebrate at ORA this year. We have now resolved 336 agunah cases, in addition to helping another 67 people receive a get through our helpline. Our educational team has taught more than 1,800 students, attorneys, rabbis and community members about the abusive

1. Celebrating Life, pg 175. My emphasis added.

Dear Friends,

It would be an oversight not to open by saying that being involved with ORA has been one of the blessings of my life. To watch a group of dedicated professionals who devote themselves, full-heartedly and with all their resources, 24/6 to protecting those without other protectors is inspiring. As Covid-19 hit, we saw and know that many of our clients are in even more dire straits than before - trapped at home with their abusers, attempting to leave their marriages with nowhere to go, and struggling to navigate an already complex process in unprecedented circumstances. ORA sprang into action, redoubling their efforts to help agunot and free them from their chains. It is ORA's tireless efforts to break these chains, no matter what, that has continuously inspired me, since the day I got involved 18 years ago. Since then, ORA has resolved 336 cases, many stopped in their tracks thanks to our early intervention helpline, and the preventative measure of the halachic prenup.

The nevi'im, the prophets, always pointed to a measure of a society's ethics as whether they were protecting the widow and the orphan - symbolic of those most vulnerable in a community. ORA's work is to protect the agunot - those most at risk and vulnerable among us - and to stand by their

nature of get refusal and the importance of signing a Halachic Prenuptial Agreement. In our office, we have facilitated over 100 prenups this year alone, in addition to the many remote prenups we have helped coordinate.

As the number of modern Orthodox instances of get refusal continues to dwindle, we know that our efforts at ORA are making a difference--not only in helping individuals find freedom, but in changing the very landscape surrounding these cases. With each agunah freed and each community reached, we are working to create a Jewish community where abuse is intolerable and where the respect and dignity of all are deeply valued. We could not make this change without you: our donors, supporters, Facebook-commenters, event-hosters, community rabbis, and more. Your courage in bringing this critical issue to the fore makes these changes possible. With your help, we can respond to this current challenge with more than mere optimism, but with hope for a better future.

Here's to making a better world, together--one case at a time.

Yours,

Keshet Starr

Keshet Starr, Esq.
CEO, ORA



side and let them know they are not alone, and the community will not stand idly by and tolerate those who pervert the words of Torah from within. Friends, please do not stand idly by. Join ORA's efforts now by hosting an educational program, learning about the halachic prenup, and of course, by becoming an ORA donor. With your help, we can end the agunah crisis speedily in our days.

Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin

Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin, Esq.
Board President, ORA



Executive Board:
Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin, Esq., President
Dr. Roz Feder-Lipsky, Vice President
Joshua Ross, Treasurer

Board of Directors:
Dena Aber
Sam Adelsberg, Esq.
Rabbi Daniel Feldman
Daniel Goldberg
Miriam Goldberg
Joshua Zvi Grauman

Chani Klein
Mitchell Krevat
Rabbi Joshua Lookstein
Elli Orlinsky
Dr. Yadaena Osband
Daniella Rohr, Esq.
Barbara Zakheim

Chief Executive Officer:
Keshet Starr, Esq.

ORA's Programs

Tackling the agunah crisis from every angle.

Prevention

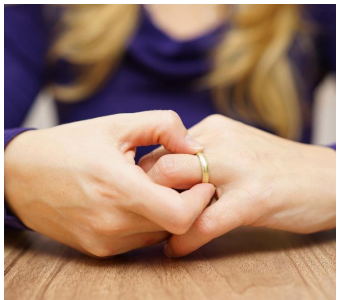


Agunah
Prevention
Initiative

One
Step
Forward

Agunah
Advocacy

Early-Intervention



Prevention: ORA educates thousands of students and community members each year through our Agunah Prevention Initiative in high schools, our college fellowship program, and community events.

Early-Intervention: Our Jewish divorce helpline, One Step Forward, fields thousands of calls for help from men and women navigating the complex Jewish divorce process. We're here to help!

Agunah Case Advocacy: A team of professional Agunah Case Advocates work one-on-one with approximately 70 agunot to implement strategies to fight for their freedom.

Advocacy



Post-nup signing celebration for grandparents of ORA Campus Fellow Zachary Beer.

The Light at the End of the Tunnel

Yakira Leah Dorfman

Trapped, chained and helpless: all words that surmise the Agunah Pandemic, and the emotional and spiritual bondage that I experienced in my search for a *get*. I remember entering Pesach, year after year – ironically the holiday of salvation and freedom – being chained. I remember celebrating birthdays and knowing I may never celebrate another one with a loving spouse. I remember worrying that I would never have the chance to have another child. And this is only a small part of my journey to freedom.

While I waited for a *get*, many Rabbonim described my story as one of the worst *get*-refusal situations they had ever seen. Truthfully, the mere fact that I am writing this story as a free woman is a miracle.

“You are not going to get your *get*,” and “I don’t know how to help you” were sentences I heard repeatedly. I started to wonder if I would ever be free, or if being an *agunah* was a situation I would just have to live with.

My case involved a multitude of intense and difficult factors including the fact that my former spouse chose a different religious path in which a *get* did not fit into his belief system. This did not stop him from attempting monetary extortion of an exorbitant amount; somehow, there was room for this in his belief system.

ORA came to fight for my freedom, along with numerous Rabbonim and many caring friends and supporters. **It was not an easy process--and even today, my former husband falsely claims that my *get* is not kosher and that we are still connected. ORA encouraged me to take action and stand up for my basic human right of freedom.** The ORA staff and their contacts were with me every step of the way, including my advocate, Yonatan Klayman, and attorney, Eytan Kobre. through our efforts, I won my fight for a *get*.



Yakira Leah Dorfman, former agunah, mother of two, education enthusiast and passionate about motherhood.

Today, nearly four years after I obtained my *get*, I am remarried with a second child. **Even now, ORA is a presence in my life and checks in as much as a family member would. I am forever grateful to everyone who has facilitated my freedom, both those who I worked with directly and the many who labored behind the scenes.**

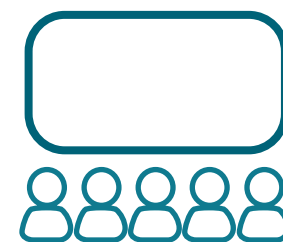
My new husband and I chose to sign a Halachic Prenup prior to marriage in 2018, in gratitude and respect to ORA. We chose to sign it out of love for each other and a devotion to the goal of preventing *get*-refusal worldwide. ORA was, once again, there to facilitate.

I am writing this letter to you standing in the light at the end of the tunnel-and every single person deserves that right.



Yonatan Klayman, Director of Advocacy at ORA and Yakira Leah's case advocate.

ORA BY THE NUMBERS



23,523

PEOPLE
EDUCATED



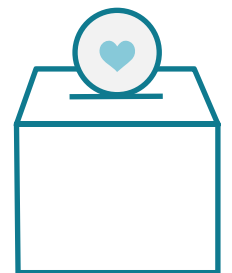
336

CASES
RESOLVED



580

PRENUPS SIGNED



886

DONORS
THIS YEAR



375

EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAMS



68

ORA CAMPUS
FELLOWS



3,842

TOTAL
HELPLINE
CALLS



1,159

NEW
ONE STEP
FORWARD
CASES OPENED



Josh Ross, Treasurer, ORA

“In 2002, ORA started as a student run initiative to assist women who were unjustly denied the Jewish bill of divorce (the *get*). Over the last decade, ORA has continued to fulfill its core mission, while developing a professional staff of nonprofit leaders who are actively involved not only in day to day case work but also strategic educational initiatives with an aim to prevent abuse from occurring in the first place.”

Bettina Kramer, ORA Supporter

“I support ORA because I was an agunah many years ago, before ORA existed. I would have embraced the support of the ORA team had it been available at the time. I am happy that ORA exists, since no agunah should have to face the *get* process alone. Thank you ORA, for the valuable resources you offer agunot. Having a professional advocate who understands what you are going through during this frustrating, and often long ordeal is a tremendous resource that I am happy to support.”



Meet the Many Faces of ORA

Everyone has a role to play in preventing get-refusal



Rabbi Leonard Matanky, Head of School, Ida Crown and Rabbi at KINS Congregation

"We live in an era of great challenge, but also of great possibilities. One such example is the age-old challenge of agunot, the great possibility to resolve so many cases via the halachic prenuptial agreement. Working side by side with rabbinic leadership, ORA has championed the cause of the preup and the opportunity our students were given to learn first from ORA staff was invaluable. ORA's presentation at Ida Crown Jewish Academy was not only very successful, but an important addition to our students' educational experiences. The presentation was clear, precise, engaging and thought-provoking, and led to many further discussions among students and faculty. I look forward to welcoming ORA back in the future."

Miriam Pincus, Campus Fellow '19

"As a campus fellow at ORA this year, I have been so impressed and inspired by the incredible work this organization does. They combine a deep respect and sensitivity towards halachic issues with a commitment to freeing their agunot with care, compassion, and drive. As an Orthodox Jew, with plans to pursue a career in social work, I learned so much from the ORA campus fellowship, like how to identify signs of abuse and how to help women at risk. Moreover, I was tasked with the opportunity to educate my campus community about the importance of the halachic preup. I can now, with my notary license, help end the agunah crisis myself, by notarizing halachic prenups, all thanks to ORA. I am forever grateful for the opportunity to have learned so much, from such committed social, halachic activists."



Rabbi Jonathan Hefter, LMSW, Director of One Step Forward

"Every caller to our helpline is dealing with a unique situation and requires individualized guidance and referrals. COVID-19 has only added additional challenges for individuals navigating the Jewish divorce process, ranging from increased tension between spouses or ex-es to difficulty accessing critical services in the community and more. At OSF, callers continue to find a safe, empathic, supportive space to share their concerns and work together on a practical plan for how to move forward."

Pamela Greenwood, ORA Supporter

"ORA helps women who are victims of terrible emotional and financial abuse to escape from their dead marriages, and we rejoice every time ORA announces that another agunah has been freed. In supporting ORA, we know that we are positively impacting not just these individuals, but the community as a whole. And we support ORA because we believe that systemic change is necessary. Through their widespread education and advocacy programs, which target high school, yeshiva/midrasha, and college students, ORA educates the next generation towards a "halachic preup culture" that will minimize the incidences of agunot in the future."



Thank you to ORA's Top Supporters



Anonymous Foundation



TORCH

Anonymous
Anonymous
Anonymous
Anonymous
Anonymous
Jeremy & Ann Pava
Josh & Shoshi Ross



SPARKLER

Anonymous
Anonymous
Anonymous
Pam and Matt Greenwood
Judy and Michael Kaiser
Shimie and Chani Klein
Bettina and Allen Kramer
Shari & Nathan J Lindenbaum
Drs. Roz Feder Lipsky and Marvin Lipsky



LANTERN

Anonymous Donors
Giti and Jack Bendheim
Shalom Carmy
Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun Sisterhood
Doris & Leonard Eis
Yehudit and Zvi Grauman
Estie and Barry Hollander
Michelle Greenberg-Kobrin and Rabbi Dr. Jeffrey Kobrin
Drs. Larry and Teena Lerner
The Jewish Center; Yosie Levine, Rabbi
Raquel Lifshutz
Elizabeth Holland and Gidon Rothstein
Tova and Howard Weiser



FLAME

Anonymous Donors
Raizi Chechik
Mr. & Mrs. Mark Gross
Dr. Yardaena Osband and David Glazer
Mishpachat Katlowitz
Sharona Kay
Amplifier
Tzipora and Alan Komet
Jen and Josh Lankin
Moishe House Retreat Giving Circle Participants
Elana Monchar
David & Ilana Prager
Elana and Marc Rothenberg
SAR High School
Rabbi Marianne Novak and Dr. Noam Stadlan
Rabbi Jason and Kimberly Strauss
Susie and Fred Toczek
Dr. Naama and Rabbi Elie Weinstock
Tzipora Yondorf
Tali and Yossi Zimilover

We'd like to extend our appreciation to the wonderful foundations and donors who support our unwavering mission to end the Agunah Crisis once and for all. Thank you for making our work possible.

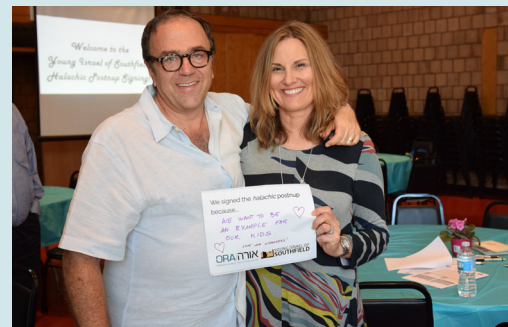
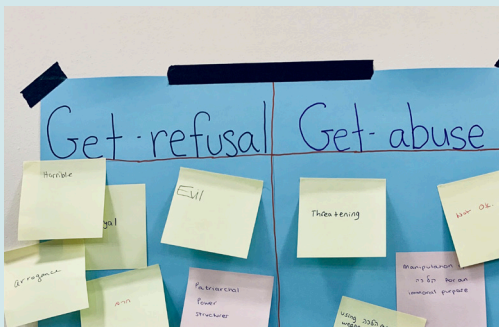
To learn more about ORA's giving circles and how to become a Top ORA Supporter, visit our website at getora.org/givingcircles.

Why I Give

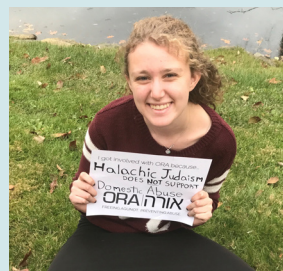


Ann Pava, ORA Supporter

"I proudly support ORA because it works! They have guided countless women going through the divorce process with kindness, sensitivity and confidentiality. They work tirelessly to help every single agunah (anywhere in the world) to get a divorce no matter how complicated the situation. And thanks to ORA the agunah issue has become almost non-existent in the modern Orthodox community with the promotion of the halachic preup. With ORA's help perhaps we'll see the end to the agunah problem in our lifetime!"



551 W 181st St. #123
New York, NY 10033
info@getora.org
(212) 795-0791



ORA אורה
FREEING AGUNOT. PREVENTING ABUSE.

FOLLOW US
getORA.org

@get.ora
 @ORAagunot
 @ORAagunot