



*Women to Watch honoree Lorey Zlotnick is applauded for her achievements in the media industry at a ceremony in Washington.*

## **Jewish beliefs, overcoming obstacles common themes for female honorees**

By Paula Amann

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 20 (JTA) A police chief sat between two doctors on the dais, and a criminal justice activist flanked an entrepreneur-philanthropist as 10 accomplished Jewish women distilled the lessons of their lives.

The 10 gathered at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel last Friday represented this year's Women to Watch, awards given annually by Jewish Women International.

At a panel discussion dubbed "Up Close and Personal," the honorees addressed issues ranging from their "angels," or mentors, to Jewish child-rearing, to the keys to achieving success in male-dominated fields. Many, like Aviva Tessler of Potomac, Md., drew strength from their Jewish roots and beliefs.

"I really try to find an angel in each person," said Tessler, cofounder of Operation Embrace, a nonprofit that assists Israeli victims of terrorism.

Tessler said she seeks to "really understand that every single human being was created b'tselem Elohim, in the image of God."

Determination in the face of obstacles emerged as a hallmark of the honorees.

Wearing her uniform, San Mateo, Calif., Police Chief Susan Manheimer drew some of the warmest applause from the audience of nearly 200 as she related her bumpy road to leadership in law enforcement.

When first promoted to captain in the San Francisco Police, she found herself put on night shift, an unexpected professional slap. But Manheimer took it as a learning experience that provided grist for advancement.

Such “little defeats” serve as a “springboard to get you up higher if you use it in the right way,” she said. “We have to thank the people who make us sharpen our swords.”

Veteran book editor Cindy Spiegel recounted getting fired just after a maternity leave from a publishing job. Suddenly, the New Yorker said, she had time on her hands to network in her field and land a job offer.

“It’s really liberating to realize one day... that bad things can happen and it can open doors,” Spiegel said.

Real estate management executive Wendy Drucker of Newport News, Va., echoed that insight.

“Roadblocks can be very energizing; it can get you going in another direction,” she said. “Tell me that I can’t do something and I will show you that I can.”

Last week’s event also included the presentation of JWI’s Community Leadership Award to Rabbi Susan Shankman of Washington Hebrew Congregation.

Other Women to Watch honored were Miami chef-restaurantier Michelle Bernstein; New York pediatrician and literacy activist Perri Klass; Baltimore physician and global women’s health activist Dr. Marcella Roenneburg; business executive and philanthropist Marcella Kanfer Rolnick; New York criminal justice activist Carol Shapiro; and Fox Reality marketing executive Lorey Zlotnick of Los Angeles.

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