

Judaism and Feminism

Tanhum Yoreh

In this course we will explore the key issues that arise in Judaism with the advent of feminism. In particular, we will examine ritualistic, social and legal issues that pertain to women in Judaism. We will look at the various ways feminism has influenced central lifecycle events in Judaism (birth, coming of age, marriage and divorce). We will discuss each topic from multiple perspectives. No prior knowledge is assumed. The essay topic must be approved. Weeks with a due date are marked with an asterix.

Evaluation: Participation 10% Oral Presentation 10% Test 30% Essay Proposal 10% Final Essay 40%

Week 1 – Introduction (History, Development and Key Issues)

Reading: Rachel Adler, "The Jew Who Wasn't There,"
<http://jwa.org/feminism/html/JWA001c.pdf>

Week 2 – Marriage and Divorce:

Reading: Tirzah Meacham, "Legal-Religious Status of the Married Woman." Jewish Women's Archive. "Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia."
<http://jwa.org/encyclopedia>

Week 3 – The Chained Woman (*Agunah*)

Reading: Rachel Biale, "The Agunah and the Yevamah" in *Women and Jewish Law*. NY: Schocken Books, 1984, 102-120.

Film: selections from Anat Zuria's *Sentenced to Marriage*

Week 4 – Commandments – Positive Time Bound Commandments

Reading: Aliza Berger, "Wrapped Attention: May Women Wear *Tefillin*?" in *Jewish Legal Writings by Women*, ed. Micah Halperin and Chana Safrai. Israel: Urim, 1998.

Week 5 – Attitudes Towards the Body – Issues of Purity

Reading: Tirzah Meacham, "An Abbreviated History of the Development of the Jewish Menstrual Laws," in Wasserfall, Rahel (ed.). *Women and Water: Menstruation in Jewish Life and Law*. Hanover, MA: University Press of New England, 1999, 23-39.

Week 6 – Sex and Sexuality

Reading: Rachel Sara Rosenthal "Of Pearls and Fish: An Analysis of Jewish Legal Texts on

Sexuality.” <http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/167233>

*Week 7 – In class test.

*Week 8 – Women of the Wall and other Jewish Feminist Organizations (*essay proposals due)

Reading: Frances Raday, “Women of the Wall,” Jewish Women’s Archive. “Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia.” <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia>

Film: Yael Katziv’s *Praying in Her Own Voice*

Week 9 – Women Rabbis – This section will explore the history of the ordination (*semikhah*) of women across the various Jewish denominations including *Maharat*, *yoetzet halakhah* and private ordination.

Reading: Michael Maher “A Break with Tradition: Ordaining Women Rabbis” *Irish Theological Quarterly*. 72, 1 (2007), 32-60.

*Week 10 – Feminism in Prayer and the Synagogue – This section will delineate the key differences in the role and status of women between the various Jewish denominations as they are reflected in prayer (*tefillah*), the prayer quorum (*minyan*), segregation in the synagogue (*mehitzah*), and being called to the Torah (*aliyah*). (*oral presentations)

Reading: Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut, “Women and the Synagogue,” in *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue*. Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut (eds.). Philadelphia: JPS, 1992, 3-14.

*Week 11 – Reclaiming Judaism – Feminist Approaches to Tradition (*oral presentations)

Reading: Einat Rimon, “Ritual: A Feminist Approach,” Jewish Women's Archive. "Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia." <<http://jwa.org/encyclopedia>>

*Week 12 – Conclusion (*final essays due)

Bibliography

Adler, Rachel. “The Jew Who Wasn’t There: Halacha and the Jewish Woman” in *Contemporary Jewish Ethics*, (ed. Menachem Marc Kellner), NY: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1978, pp. 348-54.

Adler, Rachel. *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics*. Philadelphia: JPS, 1998.

Aiken, Lisa. *To Be a Jewish Woman*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1992.

Alpert, Rebecca. *Like Bread on the Seder Plate: Jewish Lesbians and the Transformation of*

Tradition. NY: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Appleman, Solomon. *The Jewish Woman in Judaism: The Significance of Woman's Status in Religious Culture*. NY: Exposition Press, 1979.

Berger, Aliza. "Wrapped Attention: May Women Wear *Tefillin*?" in *Jewish Legal Writings by Women*, ed. Micah Halperin and Chana Safrai. Jerusalem: Urim, 1998, 75-118.

Berkovits, Eliezer. *Jewish Women in Time and Torah*. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House Inc., 1990.

Berkovits, Eliezer. "The Status of Woman Within Judaism" in *Contemporary Jewish Ethics*, (ed. Menachem Marc Kellner), NY: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1978, 355-374.

Biale, Rachel. *Women and Jewish Law*. NY: Schocken Books, 1984.

Bulka, Reuven B. *Jewish Divorce Ethics: The right way to say goodbye*. NY: By the League Press, 1992.

Cardin, Nina Beth, *Out of the Depths I Call to You: A Book of Prayers for the Married Jewish Woman*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1995.

Cayam, Aviva. "Fringe Benefits: Women and *Tzitzit*," in *Jewish Legal Writings by Women*, ed. Micah Halperin and Chana Safrai. Jerusalem: Urim, 1998, 119-143.

Chesler, Phyllis and Rivka Haut (eds.). *Women of the Wall: Claiming Sacred Ground at Judaism's Holy Site*. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003.

Epstein, Mendel. *A Woman's Guide to the Get Process*. Israel, N.P., 1989.

Fonrobert, Charlotte Elisheva. *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002.

Frankiel, Tamar. *The Voice of Sarah: Feminine Spirituality and Traditional Judaism*. San Francisco: Harper, 1990.

Golinkin, David. "The Participation of Jewish Women in Public Rituals and Torah Study 1845–2010," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, Number 21, Spring 5771/2011.

Gottlieb, Lynn. *She Who Dwells Within: A Feminist Vision of a Renewed Judaism*. San Francisco: Harper, 1995.

Greenberg, Blu. *On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition*. Philadelphia: JPS, 1981.

Greenberg, Simon (ed.). *The Ordination of Women as Rabbis: Studies and Responsa*. NY: JTS,

1988.

Greenberg, Steven. *Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.

Grossman, Susan and Rivka Haut. *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue*. Philadelphia: JPS, 1992.

Halpern, Micah D. and Chana Safrai (eds.). *Jewish Legal Writings by Women*. Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 1998.

Haut, Irwin H. *Divorce in Jewish Law and Life*. NY: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1993.

Lamm, Norman. "Judaism and the Modern Attitude to Homosexuality" in *Contemporary Jewish Ethics*, (ed. Menachem Marc Kellner), NY: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1978, pp.375-99.

Maher, Michael. "A Break with Tradition: Ordaining Women Rabbis" *Irish Theological Quarterly*. 72, 1 (2007), 32-60.

Meiselman, Moshe. *Jewish Woman in Jewish Law*. NY: Ktav Publishing House Inc., 1978.

Nadell, Pamela S. *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination 1889-1985*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998.

Ner-David, Haviva. *Life on the Fringes: A Feminist Journey Toward Traditional Rabbinic Ordination*. Needham, MA: JFL Books, 2000.

Orenstein, Debra (ed.). *Lifecycles: Jewish Women on Life Passages & Personal Milestones*. Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1994.

Plaskow, Judith. *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1990.

Porter, Jack Nusan. *Women in Chains: A Sourcebook on the Agunah*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1995.

Reuven, Israel ben. *Male and Female He Created Them: A Guide to Classical Torah Commentary on the Roles and Natures of Men and Women*. Southfield, Michigan: Targum Press Inc., 1996.

Rimon, Einat. "Ritual: A Feminist Approach," Jewish Women's Archive. "Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia." <<http://jwa.org/encyclopedia>>

Riskin, Shlomo. *Women and Jewish Divorce*, NJ: Ktav Publishing House Inc., 1989.

Ross, Tamar. *Expanding the Palace of Torah: Orthodoxy and Feminism*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2004.

Schneider, Susan Weidman. *Jewish and Female: Choices and Changes in Our Lives Today*. NY: Simon and Schuster, 1984.

Wasserfall, Rahel (ed.). *Women and Water: Menstruation in Jewish Life and Law*. Hanover, MA: University Press of New England, 1999.

Weiss, Avraham. *Women at Prayer: A Halakhic Analysis of Women's Prayer Groups*. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House Inc., 1990.

Wolowelsky, Joel B. *Women, Jewish Law and Modernity: New Opportunities in a Post-Feminist Age*. N.J.: Ktav Publishing House Inc., 1997.

Zolty, Shoshana Pantel. *"And All Your Children Shall Be Learned": Women and the Study of Torah in Jewish Law and History*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1993.

