

Religion Progressivism

Thursday, April 14, 2016

Gender Equality in Judaism: Women of the Wall

As within many religions, women are deemed as the subordinate gender to men. This is also the case within Judaism; however, recent trends have begun to unfold and open doors for women, specifically at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. There is a group known as the Women of the Wall, “a Jerusalem-based activist group that promotes the rights of women to worship at the Western Wall” (Blumberg, 2015). As of 2015, it is forbidden for women to read from the Torah as part of their worshipping at the Wall. This activist group has already made progress in the last three years through gaining access to worship at the Wall while also wearing prayer clothing typically worn by men only. This ruling was a grand step towards gender equality at this historic site. Going a further step, a group of women and men were able to smuggle a Torah into the area of the Wall and then further into the specific area where only the women are allowed to pray. Although they were able to successfully transport the Torah, it was not a peaceful transmission. Upon prayer within the women’s section at the Wall, a group of ultra-orthodox men created uproar and did not let the women continue their praying and celebration. In fact, men who assisted in the delivery did not go down without a fight and were subsequently injured in the process of removing the Torah. Their goal is to reform the religious policy set in place that states women cannot recite prayers from the Torah at the Wall. Thus far, they have successfully gained access to the wall; now, they are striving to further gain more religious freedoms just as the men have the freedom to pray from the Torah at the Western Wall.

Blumberg, Antonia. "Women of the Wall, Supporters Defy Rabbi's Regulations With Torah Reading At Western Wall." The Huffington Post. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 20 Apr. 2015. Web. 14 Apr. 2016

Posted by Elana Leibovitch at 8:12 PM No comments:

Email ThisBlogThis!Share to TwitterShare to FacebookShare to Pinterest

Polygamy: The Next Step in Marriage Equality?

When the religion Mormonism is said, the associated practice that is quickly thought of with it is polygamy. While polygamy is not unique to Mormonism, Utah, the state that houses a majority of practicing Mormons, is home to polygamists. Although it is illegal to have marriage licenses with more than one person, it is common to find a man who is legally married with one woman, while he is “spiritually married” to another. Also, there is a double standard in place when it comes to remarriage after the death of a spouse. It is known that Latter Day Saint (LDS) men can marry a “second or

even third wife within LDS temples,” yet women can only marry a second husband after they become a widow (Harrison, 2016). There have already been several polygamy-banning laws put in place over the course of history, yet polygamy has crept its ways into modern society. In addition, since same-sex marriage is now legal, this has re-opened the doors to many people who are in support of polygamy. This new-age law brings the question regarding if two people of the same-sex can legally marry, why shouldn't multiple people be able to marry (Bailey, 2015). Same-sex marriage has set a precedent for the future of marriage now; people want more legal rights within marriage beyond gay marriage. It is as if this revolution has begun a marriage revolution, opening up the minds of Mormons in search of further marital justice. It is interesting to notice that while polygamy has been rooted into more than just one religion, but it is still banned in the United States, while same-sex marriage was never rooted in any religion and it became legal in the modern era before polygamy. Not only was gay marriage, or rather any gay thought or act, not legal, but also it was more than frowned upon; within many religions, if not all, persecutions were held for those who spoke or acted in a gay manner. It can be said that polygamy is not legal in the state of Utah, nor is it legal in the U.S.; however, it is continuously being spoken about as a topic of interest in support of it becoming legalized in the near future.

Bailey, Sarah Pulliam. “Is Polygamy next in the Marriage Debate?” *Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 10 July 2015. Web. 14 Apr. 2016.

Harrison, Mette Ivie. “Do Mormons Still Practice Polygamy?” *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 22 Mar. 2016. Web. 14 Apr. 2016.

Posted by Elana Leibovitch at 9:24 AM No comments:
Email ThisBlogThis!Share to TwitterShare to FacebookShare to Pinterest
Monday, April 11, 2016

Islamic Women: Road to Rights

Although Islamic women in the United States experience the freedoms America holds, this is not true of all Islamic women worldwide. Specifically, up until only a decade ago, Moroccan women resembled that of women over 150 years ago in the U.S. Before the last ten years, married women had almost no rights within the marriage or of their own lives. The family law in Morocco, known as the Moudawana, finally saw improvement for women's rights within a marriage (Mansouri, 2016). This law changed the age in

which it is legally right for women to get married to 18. Although there are still marriages being conducted with women younger than this age, it is a huge progression within the religion in this country. In addition, before this law was passed, husbands were able to merely say the words, “I divorce you” for a marriage to be broken, leaving the now ex-wife with no where to live (because also until this law was passed they did not have property rights after a divorce) and little to no funds to support herself (because until this law was passed, they were unable to partake in commerce or conduct business without their spouses’ approval. An extension of this law and the progression of not only married women’s rights is the advancement of laws regarding education for younger girls. Only recently did laws get passed for young girls to be able to attend school and gain a proper education. Within the religion of Islam, women do not have rights and are to be subordinate to their husbands. However, with these new reforms within the religion in Morocco, it is clear the progression that has been made to enhance the role and rights of women in society.

Mansouri, Fatima Zahra. “Progress for Women in the Islamic World.” U.S. News and World Report. U.S. News, 7 Apr. 2016. Web. 11 Apr. 2016.

Posted by Elana Leibovitch at 8:03 AM No comments:
Email ThisBlogThis!Share to TwitterShare to FacebookShare to Pinterest

Wednesday, March 30, 2016

Catholic Reform: Pope Francis

Roman Catholicism, especially at the Vatican, has always taken issues such as homosexuality, child abuse, abortion, contraception, etc. seriously, as in, seriously not caring about these issues enough to be willing to see different perspectives. However, a new leaf as turned as Pope Francis begins to reform the religion as never before seen done in the modern era. Taken from a New York Times article in 2014, already more than two years ago, Pope Francis began to set a different tone in which men in his position have not taken previously. For example, in response to questions regarding homosexuals, he proposes a question back, “who am I to judge?” (The Editorial Board, 2014). In the past, other leaders would most certainly pass judgment, while it is clear in his response that even he, the Pope, does not see himself as someone who can decide who should be allowed to do various acts with whom. This is an interesting and enlightening outlook for a Pope, someone who can significantly change and reform the world, which it seems he is in the process of doing now. In addition to progressing the thoughts of Roman Catholics toward homosexuality, he also wants to transform and focus more on issues that have been collecting dust over the years. He hopes

to, instead of centering his attention on the issues mentioned earlier, focus on “ministering to the poor and marginalized, as well as...to address the issue of child sexual abuse by priest” (The Editorial Board, 2014). This is a major stepping-stone for not only Popes but also Christianity as a whole. In order to make these ideas a reality, he created a commission specifically to help cease the horrible acts done by priests. Being that the Roman Catholic Church is the largest religious organization in the world demonstrates just how influential the progress made by Pope Francis is and will be, whether it be just a mere phrase spoken or the creation of a activist board. Even still today, he remains true to his word to bringing justice through the commission board. His mere openness to discuss topics and issues that were not allowed to be brought to the table before is an astonishing progression and, in my opinion, accomplishment. It is apparent that his reforms have not only just progressed but also more people than not are in favor of his reforms. For instance, in response to his own statement regarding the possibility of potential regression to past leadership, Cardinal John Dew of New Zealand stated ‘if things were back, I think there would be a lot of dissatisfaction and unhappiness’ (Gibson, 2015).

Gibson, David. “Pope Francis and Reform: How Far Can He Go?” *America Magazine*. The National Catholic Review, 13 Mar. 2015. Web. 30 Mar. 2016

“Pope Francis’ Reforms.” *The New York Times*. Ed. The Editorial Board. The New York Times, 15 Jan. 2014. Web. 30 Mar. 2016.

Posted by Elana Leibovitch at 5:52 PM No comments:

Email ThisBlogThis!Share to TwitterShare to FacebookShare to Pinterest

Thursday, February 25, 2016

Judaism and Homosexuality

The controversial issue regarding homosexual marriages and the stance Jews take on it cannot be considered a black and white subject. As there is a wide range of religious intensity within Judaism, different viewpoints exist among this span of people. While orthodox rabbis in Israel still have rigid ideals concerning gay marriage, United States (U.S.) Jewish Americans and Reform Judaism hold a more progressive attitude. Due to the organization of Israel, religious laws define who is Jewish and to enable and recognize marriage (Lustenberger, 142). Therefore, according to Jewish law, “same-sex couples are excluded from marriage” (Lustenberger, 141). As the term implies, these rabbis are orthodox in their views of marriage, leaving the debate partial to the opinions of strict observers. If this wasn’t enough to keep the laws from changing, “the state gives official recognition and

financial support to Orthodox rabbinic courts to deal with matters of family law” (Lustenberger, 142). Even though these restrictions are placed on marriage, same-sex couples are not completely isolated within Orthodox Judaism anymore. For instance, in cities such as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, there exists, “two Modern Orthodox synagogues where same-sex couples were welcome” (Lustenberger, 143). Further, despite the fact that these rabbis hold a traditional view towards homosexuality, they are positive towards homosexual men and women on an individual level. Although there has been progress within Judaism in Israel, as seen by the involvement of homosexuals in Orthodox temples and socialization among rabbis, marriage laws do not seem to have budged quite yet. On the other hand, Jewish Americans were much more supportive of legalizing same-sex marriage (before it was legalized). As seen through five polls in 2012 and 2013, “76 percent of US Jews support legalizing same-sex marriage, while 18 percent oppose and 8 percent did not express an opinion” (Gur, 2013). These trends seem to be correlated with activeness in attending services. People who did not attend temple for prayer were “twice as likely, at 60 percent, to support legalizing gay marriage” whereas people who attended more frequently expressed lower levels of support, 28 percent” (Gur, 2013). In addition, Reform Judaism is completely accepting of LGBT individuals on all levels; they even allow gays and lesbians to serve as rabbis and cantors in all reform temples (Appell). They believe it is morally wrong to “discriminate against all individuals,” considering homosexuals are individuals, they don’t agree with discrimination against gays and lesbians. It is clear that these two sects within the religion are on opposite ends of the totem pole; Orthodox Jews still remain true to the traditional views of the Torah, while Reform Jews have evolved with views of modern society. Although the line they fall on keeps getting stretched thinner and thinner with every reformation, hopefully soon both ends can decrease the distance between them and move toward acceptance within the whole religion.

Appell, Victor. "What Does Reform Judaism Say about Homosexuality?" *Reform Judaism*. Union of Reform Judaism, n.d. Web. 25 Feb. 2016.

Gur, Haviv Rettig. "US Jews among the Most Supportive of Gay Marriage." *The Times of Israel*. The Times of Israel, 27 Apr. 2013. Web. 25. 2016.

Lustenberger, S. (2013). Conceiving judaism: The challenges of same-sex parenthood. *Israel Studies Review*, 28(2), 140-156. doi:10.3167/isr.2013.280209

Posted by Elana Leibovitch at 5:33 PM No comments:

Email ThisBlogThis!Share to TwitterShare to FacebookShare to Pinterest

[Home](#)

Subscribe to: Posts (Atom)

Blog Archive

- ▼ 2016 (5)
 - ▼ April (3)
 - Gender Equality in Judaism: Women of the Wall
 - Polygamy: The Next Step in Marriage Equality?
 - Islamic Women: Road to Rights
 - ► March (1)
 - ► February (1)

Simple template. Powered by Blogger.