

Status Of Women In Judaism

RAMAT-GAN, ISRAEL — "Many times I have been called upon to defend the woman's status in Judaism, but after studying the sources I discovered, to my great surprise, that if anyone is disadvantaged in Judaism it is the man," says Rabbanit Ayala Gliksberg in a study on the status of women in Judaism for her graduate degree at Bar-Ilan University.

According to Mrs. Gliksberg, in other religions, particularly in Christianity, the woman has an inferior status compared to man. In contrast there are numerous statements in Jewish sources which indicate that although there are differences between the commandments given to men and those given to women, "it is a matter of quantity — not quality." Moreover, many Jewish sources stress the positive position of the woman in building family life and in arranging the education of the children.

Rabbanit Gliksberg cites the explanation given by Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsh as to why women are exempt from certain commandments in Judaism. Hirsh wrote that man, in his struggle to earn a livelihood, is more susceptible to spiritual fluctuations than his female counterpart. Women, on the other hand, possessing a simpler and more stable spiritual structure are not in need of these additional commandments for their spiritual well being. Similarly, the Rabbanit points out, the Maharal was of the opinion that women expressed certain positive traits that were found less frequently in men.

In Judaism men and women are equal and different — equal as human beings but different in their roles in society and in the family. In this respect Judaism differs from ancient Greek culture, where Plato declared that women are the source of evil in the world.

Judaism does not view the individual person on his own but as a part of the family unit, and grants each one of the couple equal status — in their own sphere. The Jewish home is supposed to be based on cooperation between the male and female.

Rabbanit Gliksberg explains that the Torah says that man should leave the home of his parents and cling to his wife, whereupon they (husband and wife) will become as "one flesh." The Rabbanit explains that this verse indicates that men and women are equal as humans and that they both form the beginning of a family unit.

Competing in the world outside of her home is not easy for the Jewish woman. It is especially difficult for the educated religious woman who must also maintain a traditional home and must resist influences that she feels might detract from the traditional atmosphere.

Mrs. Gliksberg maintains that the striving of men and women to be equal is unnatural. Never-

theless, there is need for freedom of choice and equal opportunities for both sexes. One of the most pressing problems of the present generation is how to help women integrate successfully into the economic society by way of participating in public activities and developing careers.

There has been advancement in the status of women in Judaism during the past few generations. One area where this can be seen is in professional education. Already 200 years ago, a rabbinic ruling was given that a father should provide his daughter with professional education.

Mrs. Gliksberg, who is married to the Chief Rabbi of Givatayim, is herself an example of a traditional Jewish woman that has made a significant contribution in an area outside of the home. She is currently working on her Ph.D degree in the Philosophy Department at Bar-Ilan University.

Holland Will Not Prosecute Barbie

AMSTERDAM (WNS) — The Netherlands government will not prosecute Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie who was active in the gestapo in German occupied Holland in 1940-41, Justice Minister Kortals Altes told Parliament. Altes said there was insufficient evidence to bring war crimes charges against Barbie. He is known to have worked for the SS in The Hague and in Amsterdam during the latter part of 1940 and the first six months of 1941, before he was posted to France where he became gestapo chief in Lyon.

Margaret Marlow

is a Jewish idealist who cares about keeping the tradition of the Jewish faith as a Family Pre-arrangement Counsellor.



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