

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

JDS 301 (WOM 309)

Fall 2006

Froma I. Zeitlin

Gender, the Body, and Sexuality in Judaism from Biblical Israel to Contemporary America

Description: An exploration of distinctive Jewish approaches to questions of gender, sexuality, and the body, as formulated in their historical, religious, legal, ethical, and imaginative dimensions. Emphasis on received traditions (Bible, Talmud, Kabbalah) and contemporary transformations in Jewish renewal through current activist movements. Topics include the 'body of God,' circumcision, laws of purity, rites of passage, the synagogue, feminist theology, and masculine and feminine stereotypes. Primary and secondary readings, contemporary films.

Course Requirements: faithful attendance (only ONE unexcused absence permitted), participation in class discussions, written weekly responses (opinions, reactions) to the readings. Attendance at films. Midterm paper (7-10 pages); Take home final. Film showings in EP 010 Mondays 7:30 pm. [except for Tues, Oct 3 instead of Oct 2 and in McCormick 106).

Required Books:

1. Tanakh, (Hebrew Bible=Old Testament)
2. Biale, David, Eros and the Jews (Basic Books, 1992) = BIALE
4. Biale, Rachel, Women and Jewish Law: Essential Texts (1995)
5. Boyarin, Daniel, Carnal Israel, (1995) = BOYARIN
6. Hyman, Paula. Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History (1995) = HYMAN
7. Pardes, Ilana. Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach (1993) = PARDES
8. Broner, E. M. Weave of Women (1978)
9. Roth, Philip, Portnoy's Complaint (1969)

[For general introduction to Judaism, the following is RECOMMENDED (but optional).
10. Wylen, Stephen. Settings in Silver: An Introduction to Judaism (2d ed; 2000).

All other materials listed on syllabus are on electronic reserve and on Blackboard in PDF files under Course Materials.

SYLLABUS:

1. Sept 14: INTRODUCTION: PREVIEW: GENDER AND JUDAISM.

BIALE, "Introduction: Dilemmas of Desire," 1-10.
Halberstam, Joshua: "Jews Talk About their Bodies." In Schmoozing (1997) 74-104..
Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard, "The Problem of the Body for the People of the Book," in People of the Body (1992), 17-46.

OPTIONAL: Synott, Anthony, "Bodies and Senses" in *The Body Social* (1993) 228-74
[for general orientation]

2. Sept 21: HEBREW BIBLE I: BEGINNINGS. CREATION, ADAM AND EVE.

Tanakh Genesis 1-11,

Hesiod: *Creation of Woman (Pandora)* (from *Theogony & Works and Days*) 61-68, 93-100.

Plato, *Symposium*, *Myth of Aristophanes* (original androgyne)

PARDES, chs.2-3 (Eve, Genesis) 13-59.

BOYARIN, ch. 3, "Different Eves," 77-106.

Bronner, Leila, ch. 2 "Eve's Estate." in *From Eve to Esther* (1994) 22-36.

Kimelman, Reuven. "The Seduction of Eve and the Exegetical Politics of Gender," 241-69 in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader*.

Anderson, Gary. "The Garden of Eden and Sexuality in Early Judaism," 47-68, in H. Eilberg-Schwartz, *People of the Body* (1992).

Cooper, Howard, "And They Both Will Make It" in *Jewish Explorations of Sexuality*, ed. J. Magonet (1995) 239-51.

3. Sept 28: HEBREW BIBLE II: PATRIARCHS AND MATRIARCHS. Polygamy, Fertility and Barrenness: Parents and Children.

Tanakh, Genesis, chs. 12-35, [37-71], First Samuel, chs. 1-4 (Hannah).

Frymer-Kensky, Tikva, ch. 8, "Israel and the Master of the Universe," 83-100;

ch. 11 "Gender and its Image: Women in the Bible." 118-144, in *In the Wake of the Goddesses* (1993).

PARDES, chs. 4-5 (Rachel) 60-78.

Bronner, Leila, ch. 4, "Remember Thy Handmaid: On Hannah and Prayer." in *From Eve to Esther* (1994) 61-81.

Klagsbrun, Francine. "Sarah and Hannah: The Laughter and the Prayer." In *Beginning Anew* (1997) 91-105.

Heschel, Susannah, "Anti-Judaism in Feminist Christian Theology, *Tikkun* 5: 3, 25-28, 95-97.

FILM: Oct 3. *Ushpizin*

4. Oct 5: HEBREW BIBLE III: LOVE AND LOYALTY (& THEIR OPPOSITES), THE EROTIC BODY

JPS Tanakh: Ruth, Song of Songs, Hosea ch.2.4-15 (see Landy below for text & commentary)

BIALE, ch. 1 "Sexual Subversions in the Bible," 11-32.

Frymer-Kensky, Tikva, ch. 14, "Our Father and Our Mother" 162-67;

ch.15 "Zion the Beloved Woman" 168-78;
ch. 16, "Wisdom the Lover of Man" 179-83 in *In the Wake of the Goddesses* (1993).
Halbertal M. & Margalit, A. "Idolatry and Betrayal" in *Idolatry* (1992) 9-36.
Landy, Francis. "Sex and Sadism in Hosea" 17-26 in *Jewish Explorations of Sexuality* (1995).

PARDES, chs. 6-8 (Ruth, Song of Songs, Conclusion) 98-156.
Sviri, Sara. "The Song of Songs: Eros and the Mystical Quest" 41-50. In J. Magonet, *Jewish Explorations of Sexuality* (1995)/
Greenstein, Edward, "Reading Strategies and the Story of Ruth" 211-31 in *Women in the Hebrew Bible* (1999).
Bronner, Leila, "The Regime of Modesty: Ruth and the Rabbinic Construction of the Feminine Ideal" 61-86 in *From Eve to Esther* (1994).
Kates & Reimer, ed. *Reading Ruth*, ed., (1994): (all the following).
Piercy, Marge, "The Book of Ruth and Naomi" (poem); 159-60
Whitman, Ruth, "Ruth's Journey" (poem) 161-65
Dubin, Lois, "Fullness and Emptiness, Fertility and Loss: Meditations on Naomi's Tale in the Book of Ruth" 131-44.
Hirsch, Marianne, "Reading Ruth with Naomi," 309-15.
Alpert, Rebecca, "Finding Our Past: A Lesbian Interpretation of the Book of Ruth." 91-96.

FILM. Oct 9. Yentl

5. Oct 12: RABBINICS I: WOMEN'S STATUS: Family Law: Virgins and Wives, Bodily Purity.

Biale, Rachel *Women and Jewish Law* (all)
Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard "Menstrual Blood, Semen, Discharge" in *The Savage in Judaism* (1990) 177-94.
Adler, Rachel, "Tumah and Tahara" in *The Jewish Woman*, ed. E. Koltun (1976) 63-71 and
"In Your Blood Live: Re-visions of a Theology of Purity" *Tikkun* 8: Jan-Feb 1993, 38-41.
Cook, Leslie. "Body Language: Women's Rituals of Purification in the Bible and the Mishnah," In *Women and Water: Menstruation in Jewish Life and Law*. ed. Rahel Wasserfall (1999) 40-59/
Slonim, Rivkah, ed. *Total Immersion* (1996) (selections) "Introduction" xxiii-xxxvi,
Bulka, Reuven. "A Most Delicate Mitzvah" 64-75,
Lapin, Daniel. "Men and Mikvah" 118-24,
Miller, Menashe "The Sweet Scent of a Mitzvah" 175-77,
Huberband, Shimon, "In Nazi-Occupied Europe" 185-89.
Schiffman, Lisa, "Stray Hairs and Painted Nails," in *Generation J* (1999) 77-93.
Boyarin, Daniel, "Torah Study and the Making of Jewish Gender," 515-46, adapted from ch. 4, *Unheroic Conduct* (1997) in *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible*. Brenner, Athalia & Carol Fontaine, eds.(1997).

Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters. New Mikveh facility in Newton, MA. With an extensive agenda and for men as well as women. <http://www.mayyimhayyim.org/index.asp>

OPTIONAL: Marmon, Naomi. "Reflections on Contemporary Mikveh Practice," in *Women and Water*, ed. Rahel Wasserfall (1999) 232-54.

OPTIONAL: BOYARIN, ch. 6, "Studying Women," 167-196.

FILM: Oct 16: *Europa, Europa* (German, 1990), dir. Agnieszka Holland.

6. Oct 19: RABBINICS II--MEN'S STATUS: Sexuality, Circumcision

BIALE, ch. 2 "Law and Desire in the Talmud," 33-59.

BOYARIN, chs. 4, 5: "Engendering Desire" 107-33, "Lusting after Learning" 134-66.

Hoffman, Laurence, *Covenant of Blood* (1996) chapter 4, "Reconstructing the Rite," 64-77.

Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard "The Fruitful Cut: Circumcision and Israel's Symbolic Language of Fertility, Descent, Gender" in *The Savage in Judaism* (1990) 141-75.

Biale, David. "Does Blood Have Gender in Jewish Culture," in *Gendering the Jewish Past* (2002) 7-23.

Shell, Marc, "The Holy Foreskin; or, Money, Relics, and Judeo-Christianity" in *Jews and Other Differences*, ed. D. Boyarin and J. Boyarin (1997), 345-54.

Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard, "A Masculine Critique of a Father God" in *Tikkun* 10:5, 58-62.

Levenson, Jon. "The new Enemies of Circumcision," *Commentary* (March 2000) 29-36.

OPTIONAL:

Gilman, Sander. "Decircumcision: The First Aesthetic Surgery." *Modern Judaism* 17.3 (1997) 201-10.

Gross, Abraham. "The Blood Libel and the Blood of Circumcision: An Ashkenazic Custom That Disappeared in the Middle Ages" *Jewish Quarterly Review* 86.1/2 (1995), 171-174.

Moss, Lisa "Current Debate: Circumcision Decision" debate on circumcision from *Tikkun* 10: 5, (Moss, Landes, Robin) 70-74.

Schoen, Edgar. "The Circumcision Decision." *Moment* (Oct 1997)

"Circumcision: Cutting the HIV Rate?" *Newsweek*: MSNBC, Oct 31, 2005.

Wikipedia: Circumcision [Everything you ever wanted to know and more]

FILM: Oct. 23. *The Dybbuk* (Yiddish, 1937) dir. Michael Waszynski.

7. Oct 26: PHILOSOPHY AND KABBALAH. medieval and mystical currents.

BIALE, chs. 3,4, 5: "Rabbinic Authority and Popular Culture in Medieval Europe" 60-85, "Sensuality, Asceticism, and Medieval Jewish Philosophy" 86-100, "Sexuality and Spirituality in the Kabbalah" 101-120.

Matt, Daniel. "Introduction: A Glimpse into the Orchard," *The Essential Kabbalah* (1994) 1-17.

Ariel, David, *The Mystic Quest* (1988), chs. 5-6: "The Calculus of the Divine World," *The Shekhinah*, 65-109.

Wolfson, Elliot. "The Body in the Text: A Kabbalistic Theory of Embodiment." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95.3 (2005) 479-500.

Wolfson, Elliot, "On Becoming Female: Crossing Gender Boundaries in Kabbalistic Ritual and Myth," in *Gender and Judaism* (1995) 209-28.

Fine, Lawrence. "Purifying the Body in the Name of the Soul: The Problem of the Body in Sixteenth Century Kabbalah" in *People of the Body* (1992) 117-142.

RECOMMENDED (highly):

Mopsik, Charles. "The Body of Engenderment in the Hebrew Bible, the Rabbinic Tradition, and the Kabbalah," 48-73, in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, part I (1989), eds. M. Feher

Wolfson, Elliot, "Woman -- the Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah: Some Philosophical Observations on the Divine Androgyne," in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History* (1994) 166-204., eds Laurence J. Silberstein and Robert L. Cohn.

Midterm paper due Oct 27. Last Possible Date: Nov 7

FALL BREAK

FILM: Nov 6. *The Governess*, dir. Sandra Goldbacher

8. Nov 9: MODERNITY. Emancipation, Gender, and Assimilation. Tradition and Transition.

BIALE, chs. 6,7, 8: "The Displacement of Desire in Eighteenth-Century Hasidism" 121-48, "Eros and Enlightenment" 149-75, "Zionism as an Erotic Revolution" 176-203.

HYMAN, ch.1, "Paradoxes of Assimilation," 10-49; ch. 2, "Seductive Secularism; ch 4, "Sexual Politics and Jewish Identity" 134-69 .

Sholem Aleichem, Excerpts from *Teveye the Dairyman*: "Today's Children," "Hodl," "Chava," "Teveye Leaves for the Land of Israel," and "Lekh-Lekho" ["Get Thee Out"], 35-82; 97-131(originally published, 1899; 1904; 1905;1907; 1914/1916).

FILM: Nov 13: *Trembling Before G-D*, dir. Sandi Simcha Dubowski

9. Nov 16: FREUD, FEMININITY, AND JUDAISM and Anna O.

Gilman, Sander, "Sigmund Freud and the Epistemology of Race" in *Freud, Race, and Gender* (1993), 12-48.

Yerushalmi, Yosef, "The Fourth Humiliation" in *Freud's Moses* (1991), 1-18+ illustrations.

Appignanesi, Lisa and John Forrester, "The First Patients" in *Freud's Women* (1992) 63-86.

Pappenheim, Bertha, "The Jewish Woman" in *The Jew in the Modern World* (1995) P. Mendes-Flohr and J. Reinharz, eds., 287-89.

Shepherd, Naomi, "The Rebel as Lacemaker: Bertha Pappenheim and the Problem of Jewish Feminism" in *A Price Below Rubies* (1993), 208-242.

OPTIONAL. Boyarin, Daniel, "Retelling the Story of O. Or, Bertha Pappenheim, My Hero" in *Unheroic Conduct* (1997) 313-359.

****START READING Philip Roth, Portnoy's Complaint**

FILM: Nov 27: *Hester Street* (1975), dir. Joan Michlin Silver

10. Nov 30: AMERICA, AMERICA: Immigration and its Consequences.

HYMAN, "America, Freedom, and Assimilation" 93-133.

Prell, Riv-Ellen, "Ghetto Girls and Jewish Immigrant Desire," 21-57, in *Fighting to Become Americans* (1999).

Shinner, Peggy, "Collecting Herself" in *Her Face in the Mirror* (1994), ed. Faye Moskowitz, 280-85.

Review BIALE, "Introduction: Dilemmas of Desire," 1-10 (from week 1)

Philip Roth Portnoy's Complaint (1969). (novel).

OPTIONAL: Yeziarska, Anzia, "The Fat of the Land." in *Follow My Footprints* (1992) ed. Sylvia Barack Fishman, 175-193.

FILM: Dec 4: *Crossing Delancey* (1988) dir, Joan Micklin Silver.

11. Dec 7: GENDER AND THEOLOGY: Revisions of Tradition, Feminist Spirituality, Gay and Lesbian concerns, New Rituals.

Plaskow, Judith, "Jewish Theology in Feminist Perspective," in *Feminist Perspectives in Jewish Studies* (1994), eds. Davidson & Tenebaum, 16-32.

Myers, Jody E. "The Myth of Matriarchy in Recent Writings on Jewish Women's Spirituality," *Jewish Social Studies* 4.1 (1997) 1-27.

Alpert, Rebecca chs. 1-3, *Like Bread on the Seder Plate: Jewish Lesbians and the Transformation of Tradition* (1997). 1-52. 169-72. [in 3 separate PDF files]

Kahn, Yoel, "The Liturgy of Gay and Lesbian Jews," in *Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian, Gay and Jewish*, eds. C. Balka and A. Rose (1989), 182-97.

E. M. Broner, *A Weave of Women* (1978) (novel)

FILM: Dec 11: *The Frisco Kid* (1979), dir. Robert Aldrich (Harrison Ford, Gene Wilder)

12. Dec 14: IMAGES OF JEWISH MEN & WOMEN IN POPULAR CULTURE: Stereotypes and Countertypes

BIALE, ch. 9 "Sexual Stereotypes in American Jewish Culture," 204-27, and Epilogue, "Creating Desire," 228-30.
Brod, Harry. "Of Mice and Supermen: Images of Jewish Masculinity," 279-94, in *Gender and Judaism* (1995)..
Prell, Riv-Ellen, "The Jewish American Princess," 177-200, in *Fighting to Become Americans* (1999).
Halberstam, Joshua, "The Jewish Battle of the Sexes" in *Schmoozing: the Private Conversations of American Jews* (1997), 105-49.
Berger, Aishe, "Nose is a Country" (poem), in *Tribe of Dina*, eds. Kaye/Kantorowitz and Klepfisz (1989) 134-38.

Take Home Final