

Letter to the Editor

Carmen Levin

[Dear Editor,]

This subject [Women in Judaism] is one that is so familiar, you see, I am a Jewish woman of orthodox background. Generally most western secularists view our role as limited and somewhat secondary to the male gender. While in truth this is exactly an outsider's view or a non-informed view of the women's position within the religion. It is the same notion that describes kashrus as only being meat blessed by a rabbi. Or to say a person is a great astronomer if he sings "twinkle, twinkle little star."

Abraham our father even though a great man was advised by G-d to listen to Sarah and do as she advised. We had women Judges and we had women who were recorded in the books of the Tanach as of importance. It should be noted that only the books that are relevant to the future of the nation as a whole were preserved. That is to say that there were many others that were not. Noteworthy is the distinction that is given to women that they are relieved of the time bound obligations, i.e., prayer and learning. Although unlike most outsiders think, we are not prohibited from learning Gemora or of taking the man's obligations (wearing tallis or tefillin). It is simply not done, because most of us realize and are secure enough to understand that while men need to repeat three times a day that the Master of the universe is One, that we know it, acknowledge it, and understand it.

We women did not partake of the sin of the Golden Calf and it was in our merit that Hashem delivered us from Egypt. And when the Rambam write this famous letter to his son, he counsels him to follow the ways of your father and keep the Torah of your mother. Because being Jewish comes from the mother (traditionally).

So, women in Judaism are not equal partners. We have a special place; because of us Judaism continues. We are the educators and the enforcers of our traditions. If a wicked man marries a righteous woman, he will become righteous. If a righteous man marries a wicked woman, he will become wicked. We are the center of the home and we are the providers. Without us we will cease to exist as a nation.

Carmen Levin
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(With minimal editing. ---Editor)