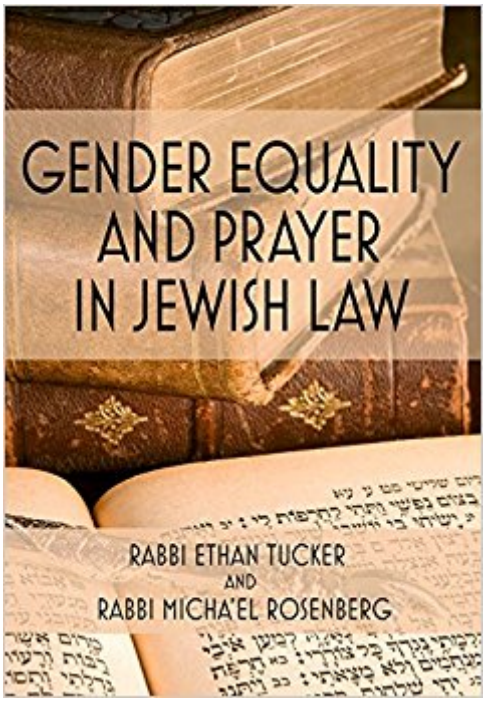
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Gender Equality And Prayer In Jewish Law



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Synopsis

As gender equality has spread throughout society, including its religiously observant sectors, traditional communities turn to their guiding sources to re-examine old questions. This book opens the readerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s eyes to the wealth of Jewish legal material surrounding gender and prayer, with a particular focus on who can lead the prayers in a traditional service and who can constitute the communal quorumÃ¢â ¬â •or minyanÃ¢â ¬â •that they require. With honesty, transparency, and rigor, Gender Equality and Prayer in Jewish Law is a powerful resource for grappling with these complex questions. The authors not only explore this specific issue in depth, but they also model how we can mine the Jewish legal tradition for its underlying values, enabling its complex sources to serve as effective guides for contemporary communal decision-making.

Book Information

Hardcover: 128 pages

Publisher: Urim Publications (February 20, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 965524198X

ISBN-13: 978-9655241983

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 0.7 x 8.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #886,828 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #29 inÃ Â Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Law #576 inÃ Â Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Gender & Sexuality #1303 inÃ Â Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Sacred Writings

Customer Reviews

Rabbi Ethan Tucker was named one of AmericaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Top 50 Rabbis by Newsweek from 2012 to 2013, and is cofounder and the yeshiva head at Mechon Hadar, where he serves as chair in Jewish Law. Ordained by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel he is a cofounder of Kehilat Hadar and a winner of the first Grinspoon Foundation Social Entrepreneur Fellowship. He lives in New York City. Rabbi MichaÃ¢â ¬â„¢el Rosenberg is an assistant professor of rabbinics at Hebrew College. He was ordained by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, holds a doctorate in Talmud and Rabbinic Literature from the Jewish Theological Seminary, and is an alumnus of the Wexner Graduate Fellowship program. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Rabbis Ethan Tucker and Micha’el Rosenberg continue to be important voices in the halakhic conversation surrounding gender. This book tackles two questions: whether a woman can serve as a Shelihat Tzibbur, and whether a woman can count in a Minyan. Along the way, issues of women’s aliyot are addressed, as well as the larger point regarding the status of the modern woman.Refreshingly honest and clearly presented, Gender Equality and Prayer in Jewish Law addresses the core claims of arguments against gender equality and affirms the need, where necessary, to take a "gender blind" approach to laws surrounding the prayer service.Regardless of whether one agrees with the conclusions drawn in this book, it is an absolute must read. It has fantastic insights on both sides of the ’gender and prayer’ debate, and uses classical rabbinic sources to reach its conclusions.Highly recommended!

"Gender Equality and Prayer in Jewish Law" is an excellent thoughtful book. Whether a reader agrees with the two rabbis who authored the book or not, he or she will find a wealth of information in the book that will prompt thought.Whether the Hebrew Bible disparaged women or not is still a subject that scholars debate even though there is no clear negative statement in the Torah about women. Furthermore, there is no indication in the Torah that women are excluded from biblical mandated activities. True, current Jewish law is that women do not have to observe certain positive commands that come a certain time, not always, such as the blowing of a shofar or dwelling in a sukkah, but not all of them. Shabbat is an example of an exception. But this rule is not in the Bible. One commentator, Luzzatto, for example, contends that women are biblically required to observe all biblical laws, just as men, but in a later age women were allowed to refrain from observing certain positive laws because it interfered with the many other more necessary activities they were engaged in, such as raising and educating children.In this book, the two rabbis discuss the issue whether women may participate in and lead public prayer. When did the idea arise that they should not do so? Is praying a biblical requirement? What different ideas were offered to support a female prohibition? Are these reasons applicable today, such as men being embarrassed that a woman prayer leader knows more about leading prayers than them or that they would be sexually aroused by hearing women singing?We also learn about the origin of the idea that some prayers need ten males before they are recited, a concept that is also not biblical although some biblical language is used to support the practice, and why women are not included in the ten. Also, among much else, why some rabbis insist that women should be treated as slaves and children in respect to some laws.The authors end their book by quoting Sifre Bemidbar 133 which compares humans to God: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Flesh and blood show greater goodness to males than to females, but the

One-Who-Spoke-the-World-into-Being is not so, but is good to all, as it is saidÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœThe Lord is good to all and shows kindness to all creaturesÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ (Tehillim [Psalm] 145:9).ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•

This book is a scholarly guide through over a thousand years of Jewish law and commentary. It also has a strong sociological context because one the ongoing arguments by Orthodox Jews to exclude women from the Minyan and other Jewish community groupings is the concept that it would violate or harm the "honor of the community." The authors ask if this standard "honor of the community" is fixed in meaning based on the structure and form of the Jewish community ages ago, or must this term now take into account the current form of most societies where men and women are equal under the law and the norms of modern societies. In fact, the authors even ask if it would now dishonor the community to exclude women from the Minyan, leading prayer, and other groupings called for under Jewish law. Further, the authors ask the question whether such exclusion of women could, in this day and time, and going forward, even harm or discredit or dishonor Judaism itself.This is an excellent book and every page is worth reading, every footnote is worth reading, and even the appendices are worth reading. The timing of this book could not be more perfect as recently the Israeli government has gone back on its decision to allow for women and men to pray together at the Wailing Wall in Israel, igniting a firestorm among liberal and conservative Jews who have adopted egalitarianism as a mainstay principle of their current Jewish faith.Most importantly, this book will educate all sides on this question. As an egalitarian myself, I find the length the authors go to include and objectively analyze every argument to exclude women refreshing. Those who want to permanently exclude women from leadership roles and prayer groups in Judaism will always be with us, but those who demand in every aspect of life egalitarianism, as I do, this book gives me excellent grounding for my moral position that any discrimination against women is totally objectionable.I hope this book helps promote honest debate for this critical topic facing Judaism. Clearly, those who just want to keep women out of leadership roles and even participation in key aspects of Jewish groups in life and prayer who say "this is not the way it is done" will not (or should not) have a respected place in the future intellectual debates on this topic. And, that maybe a great contribution of this book.

A highly sensitive and robust analysis of the legal sources on Gender and Prayer in Jewish Law.

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