

Kelvin Gani (Current Events Paper)

Among Orthodox Jews, More Openness on Sexuality

There is a story of a young Hasidic woman who had been married two years without becoming pregnant. After seeing a fertility specialist, she discovered that the patient and her husband had no idea that they had never had sexual intercourse in their marriage. As a result, there are kallah teachers who prepare Orthodox Jewish brides to be intimate with their husbands and also there is a live forum discussion website called Calm Kallahs. The forum website was started in 2005 by Marla Lemonik because many prospective Jewish brides were asking questions about sex. A lot of brides were too embarrassed to ask about sex face to face, so by giving them chance through online forum discussion makes them feel more comfortable, open, and eager to asking about sex related questions.

In the Orthodox Jews community; sexuality was an issue that would never be spoken, particularly by teachers or rabbis. Even as sex has become more openly a part of American popular culture, Orthodox Jews leaders have increasingly emphasized a culture of modesty. According to Ms. Marcus, a medical sexologist and observant Jew, “Many of her Orthodox Jewish patients are unfamiliar with even the basics of sexual health.” There are some frustrations and challenges in the Modern Orthodox single community, in terms of their sexuality. Finally in January, David Pelcovitz, professor of education and psychology at Yeshiva University, spoke at a two-session forum conversation about how to talk about sex in a way that encourages healthy relationships between husbands and wives. By having this issue addressed, Jewish married couples do not have to worry about sexual problem in their marriage. They were really happy that it was finally being addressed. Orly Lieberman, a kallah teacher from Manhattan said that such events or forum reflected the development of a conversation about sexuality in the Orthodox Jews community.

Kelvin Gani (09-17-2008) (“*Among Orthodox Jews, More Openness on Sexuality*”)

Phil-82 (R.Falcioni)

Orthodox Jews are known for the group that most resist change. They are very conservative and they keep their tradition out of the modern world. However, some orthodox Jews have finally changed the way they deal with new ideas and issues. They are now more open on sex related issues.

I think it is a very good thing that they started to adapt with the current situation because their laws might have been too outdated for the current day and age. Years ago, Orthodox Jews are still very strict about all these sex issues; i.e. physical contact with the opposite sex like holding hands or being in the same room with the door closed is off limits before marriage, and publicly chatting with the opposite sex can be punished. Moreover, the teachers and Rabbis have never spoken about sex issues either. As a result, there are a lot of sexual problems occur in the marriage of the orthodox Jewish couple. In my opinion, they now had realized that the laws that they use does not fit anymore in this day and age. Furthermore, I as well think that they have to choose and decide very carefully for the right ideas because not all of the current ideas are right and appropriate.

Jennie Rosenfeld, director of Tzelem, a project housed at the Center for the Jewish Future, at Yeshiva University also said that, “It is important to bring the issue up in a more public way because our belief of modesty is wrong if it’s leading us to send couples into marriage without enough preparation.”(par. 18) I also feel that having more knowledge about sex in order to encourage healthy relationships between husbands and wives is not a violation of Jewish laws. By willingly addressing this issue, I think some Orthodox Jews had finally realized that they can apply new ideas without violating Jewish law. This event showed me that some Orthodox Jews are now more open on talking about new ideas or issues.