

U A H C

DIMENSIONS

in American Judaism

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Rabbi Norman Lamm
131 West 86th Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Rabbi Lamm:

I recently read the following paragraphs by Bruno Bettelheim about the role Judaism gives to the Jewish woman. He writes:

...And if the Jew was a woman, she felt even more degraded by a religion that required men to thank God each day that He had not created them female.

Beyond this I have a feeling which I cannot substantiate. But few religions have been as rejecting of womanhood as the Jewish one. It was a religion that viewed her very femininity as a curse, that condemned her to apartheid in its places of worship, that even forbade her to wear her own hair, and required her to shave it off at marriage.

It was this ritual rejection of femininity by their parents, and their own glorification of masculine pursuits, that may have influenced the first kibbutz generation to view man's work as preferable to woman's, including the work of rearing children.

Bettelheim says, of course, that he cannot substantiate his feelings and thus his statement is nothing more than a generalization. Many people who, like Bettelheim, have not taken the trouble to substantiate their claims, very often express similar sentiments.

Would you be interested in writing an article for Dimensions on this subject? I can offer you \$75 for a 3,000 word piece which I would want to have by the end of March. I do hope you will say yes.

Cordially,

Myrna Pollak
Editor

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