



BRAVE MISS WORLD

IX QUESTIONS JEWISH COMMUNITIES

I

Over the course of *Brave Miss World*, Linor Abargil undergoes a religious transformation, becoming deeply connected to the practices and beliefs of Orthodox Judaism. What do you make of her growing faith? How does it affect her healing process? How does it affect her family? Her friendships?

II

Within the Jewish community, as within other religious communities, communication about sexual assault, sexual victimization or exploitation, and sexual abuse has often been muted or considered taboo. Why do you think this is the case? Do you think this has changed over the course of your own lifetime?

III

The rape or sexual abuse of congregants or followers by their Rabbis or other spiritual leaders has made international news in recent years, with cases coming to prominence in Brooklyn, in Sydney, and in London, among other cities. Does news reporting on cases of sexual assault within the Jewish community help to end the traditional “silence” around rape? Does such coverage and communication make it easier to talk about rape and sexual assault in your community? Does it make it harder? Why or why not?

IV

There is a long tradition of “matchmaking” between young, single people in Jewish communities; today, such matchmaking ranges from traditional, religious practices of “Shidduch” in Orthodox communities to the use of Jewish dating sites like JDate and JewishCafe among secular Jews. Do you think that dating within one’s religious or cultural group makes a person feel less vulnerable to sexual assault or rape? Are these feelings justified, or mythical?

V

Sexual violence is often used as a weapon of war. Recently published studies of and testimonials from Holocaust survivors indicate that rape of Jewish women and girls was a common and widespread tool of control and subjugation among the Nazis. Does this information alter your understanding of the Holocaust? Does it affect the way you think about rape as a crime of power and violence? (For more information, see the Women Under Siege Project at www.womenundersiegeproject.org/conflicts/profile/holocaust.)

VI

Many Jewish scholars and spiritual leaders have documented the myriad ways in which Jewish law forbids sexual assault and rape. (For an example, read Rabbi Mark Dratch’s discussion of Jewish Law and sexual abuse at JSafe.org: www.jsafe.org/pdfs/052206.pdf.) Do you agree with Rabbi Dratch’s assertion that “One does not need a Code of Law to forbid such acts; they are inherently repulsive and repugnant?” Or do you think that codes and laws—including religious codes—are necessary to reinforce the criminal and immoral nature of sexual assault? Why or why not?

VII

There is an oft-cited concern that openly discussing the incidence of sexual violence within the Jewish community will fuel anti-Semitism and bigotry. What do you make of this concern? Is it reasonable to silence accounts of sexual violence in order to mitigate anti-Semitism?

VIII

According to Rabbi Mark Dratch of JSafe.org, the Torah “explicitly compares rape to murder”. (See **“I Do? Consent And Coercion in Sexual Relations”**, at JSafe.org.) How do you think your community or country would be different if rape were prosecuted, punished or investigated in the same way murder is?

IX

Many survivors of rape and sexual assault find solace, comfort, and guidance from elders or leaders in their religious communities, or from the community at large. If you or someone you know were the target of sexual violence, would you look for support and resources from your religious community? To whom would you turn, and why?