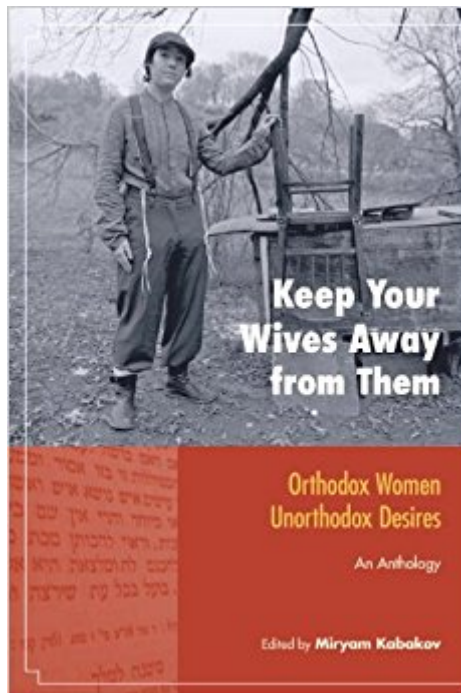




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Keep Your Wives Away From Them: Orthodox Women, Unorthodox Desires



Synopsis

***WINNER, 2011 Golden Crown Literary Award - Anthology Reconciling queerness with religion has always been an enormous challenge. When the religion is Orthodox Judaism, the task is even more daunting. This anthology takes on that challenge by giving voice to genderqueer Jewish women who were once silenced—and effectively rendered invisible—by their faith. *Keep Your Wives Away from Them* tells the story of those who have come out, who are still closeted, living double lives, or struggling to maintain an integrated "single life" in relationship to traditional Judaism—personal stories that are both enlightening and edifying. While a number of films and books have explored the lives of queer people in Orthodox and observant Judaism, only this one explores in depth what happens after the struggle, when the real work of building integrated lives begins. The candor of these insightful stories in *Keep Your Wives Away from Them* makes the book appealing to a general audience and students of women's, gender, and LGBTQ studies, as well as for anyone struggling personally with the same issue. Contributors include musician and writer Temim Fruchter, Professor Joy Ladin, writer Leah Lax, nurse Tamar Prager, and the pseudonymous Ex-Yeshiva Girl. *Keep Your Wives Away from Them* official website: <http://www.KeepYourWivesAwayFromThem.com/>

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Jews with unconventional identities should not have to wrestle alone at the intersection where their tradition seems to clash with their integrity as loving human beings. Like Moses responding to the travail of his brothers (Ex. 2:11), a caring halachic Jewish community should

respond seriously to the heartfelt appeal of our contemporary sisters. — Rabbi Dr. Tzvi C. Marx, author of *Disability in Jewish Law* — “Moving. Challenging. Frustrating. Exhilarating. Important reading for all, indispensable for some. This book will save lives and heal souls, and it is sure to be banned in some circles because of that.” — Shaul Kelner, assistant professor of sociology and Jewish studies, Vanderbilt University, and author of *Tours that Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Tourism* — “Each powerful essay challenges my preconceptions about the nature of religious lives and communities, about gendered selves, and about the delights and constraints of Orthodox Judaism. *Keep Your Wives Away from Them* is a complex spirit journey that speaks of the longing for love and the search for comforting and comfortable identities.” — Vanessa L. Ochs, associate professor of religious studies University of Virginia, and author of *Inventing Jewish Ritual* — “At last the Jewish feminist bookshelf will include the reflections of Orthodox LGBTQ women, and what reflections they are! Lyrical, honest, painful, smart, triumphant, and powerful, this book invites all of us into the richness and complexity of Orthodox LGBTQ life and should be read by anyone who cares about Judaism and Jewish life, as well as religion and sexuality.” — Riv-Ellen Prell, professor of American studies, University of Minnesota, and editor of *Women Remaking American Judaism* — “[*Keep Your Wives Away From Them*] tells the stories of 14 women who were at one point in their lives silenced and made invisible by the conflict between their sexual, religious and cultural identities. [This book] presents a range of voices from people have come to terms with their identity as women-loving women and integrated this identity, in one way or another, with their identify as traditionally observant Jews.” — TCJewFolk.com — “Kabakov’s collection of fourteen personal and scholarly essays not only acknowledges Jewish dykes, it argues that as long as Orthodox Judaism exists, there will be Orthodox LGBTQ people. The anthology includes the voices of diverse women, all of them bound by a desire to maintain a connection to traditional Jewish life — reciting daily prayers, keeping kosher, going to a monthly mikveh after menstruating, observing the Sabbath — but with a female partner. | *Keep Your Wives Away from Them* is a bold plea for tolerance.” — Feminist Review — “This engaging, touching, sometimes hilarious, and sometimes heart-breaking anthology brings together the voices of queer Jewish women from across the gender spectrum. Experienced scholars of Judaism and relative neophytes alike will come away with a deeper understanding of Jewish tradition, Jewish law, Jewish gender construction, and the interaction of gender and religiosity.” — | The essays in this volume strike a nice balance between personal, confessional narrative, and scholarly discourse on Judaism and rabbinic law — | The result is a collection of

essays that both enlighten the reader on important matters of gender and sexuality with Judaism while also conveying a sense of what it means and looks like to live as an Orthodox woman—whether lesbian, trans, or somewhere else on the gender spectrum.

•New York Journal of Books—“One of the best features of *Keep Your Wives Away From Them* is a resource guide at the end of the book which includes websites of synagogues, schools, and Jewish organizations that provide education, support, and socialization opportunities for religious LGBT Jewish people| libraries with large LGBT and Jewish Studies collections should have a copy of this book on hand.

•LambdaLiterary.org—“A pioneering collection of essays about lesbianism in the Orthodox community.

•Tablet Magazine—“The bulk of the essays [in *Keep Your Wives Away From Them* are] personal statements about the women’s efforts to reconcile the various parts of their identities and their need for finding community and family acceptance. Some of the essays are narrative while others are written in more poetic free forms. The volume includes a glossary of Jewish terms and an annotated list of Jewish LGBT resources. Recommended.

•Sheryl Stahl, Association of Jewish Libraries Newsletter—“*Keep Your Wives Away From Them*, perfect for women just coming out or for their families, has an honorable and useful place in the evolving history of our people.

•Lilith Magazine

Miryam Kabakov is director of the Minneapolis Jewish Film Festival, national program director of AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps, coordinator of LGBT programming at the Manhattan Jewish Community Center, and a frequent speaker and workshop leader. She lives in Minnesota.

these essays are a window into the life and struggles of lesbian or transgendered Jewish women, many with orthodox upbringing, and how the Jewish world treated them, their coming out or transition. The essays were all well written, personal, moving and honest. I had difficulty when one of the essayists embraced the Palestinian struggle and compared the West Bank occupation as a parallel struggle of gays (Jewish or not). however, even that essay was illuminating, and raised the question for me of whether the Orthodox Jewish rejection of LGBTQ community not only drives our precious Jewish children out of our community but some perhaps even into the camps of those who would like to see the destruction of the Jewish state. Anyway, if you’re open to learning about Jewish LGBTQ struggles, you will enjoy and profit from these stirring essays.

"Keep Your Wives From Away From Them" presents the stories of an exceedingly narrow

demographic: "LGBT" observant Jewish women. Yet the authors poignantly and articulately sound universal themes about the challenges of being "different" in a world that fundamentally rejects such "differentness." To compound matters, most of the authors made the discovery of their differentness in their formative years. Compound again, by ensconcing them in a hermetic community that rejects such differentness as a violation of divine law. How does one come to terms with family and community steeped in religious traditions that fundamentally reject such fundamental differentness, and value traditional marriage and having children as a central tenet of religious and community life? How does one live from day-to-day when even looking in the mirror is an existential struggle? The group of contributors to "Keep Your Wives From Away From Them" lead you through their individual voyages of self-discovery, and the fears, terrors, joys and ultimate triumphs of coming to terms with family, community, and themselves in the struggle to live their lives in accordance with their true identities. For all, it is hard. For some, the journey is not complete. For some, there is much scar tissue. Others have been fortunate to reconcile with family and self, and even to an extent, the communities that rejected them. But what truly inspires is how the loss of community, family and self-identity beget the birth of new communities, courageously wrought by these pioneers out of the very pain and suffering they experienced. For me, as a "straight" person, reading about how the contributors overcame their fears, and the antagonism, prejudice and rejection of their peers and families, to build a community, and sub-communities, based on love and acceptance, was most inspiring of all. And the ultimate irony is that the very spirituality that is supposed to underlay the religious community that rejected their life choices is the underpinning for their new communities. Perhaps most inspiring of all is the refusal of these women to reject the very God they were told had rejected them, choosing instead to relate to that God, spiritually and intellectually, in a way that enables them to be who they are and still retain the traditional values that are still so central to them. In doing so, they have added in a meaningful way to the dialogue of religious law and theology. In these struggles and triumphs there are untold numbers of universal lessons to be learned about self, courage, the overcoming of prejudice, and the acceptance of others. About how we might view the tenets of religion - reconcile - and have a relationship with the ultimate power on our own terms, as long as we retain our spirituality. Inspirational, even for an avowed atheist (like me). You can read many great novels about these subjects. You can also read "Keep Your Wives From Away From Them." And pick up a bit of Yiddish along the way. Highly, highly recommended.

Fantastic! The Author has the experience and knowledge to write about such a sensitive, yet brave

topic!

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