

Innovative ideas in the social sciences and humanities

Queer Readings of the Hebrew Bible

Since the latter half of the twentieth century scholars have interpreted the narratives about the triangle relationship of David to King Saul and his son Jonathan in the Books of Samuel in a homoerotic way. Several sculptors and painters from the Early Renaissance to the present time identify with the pederast Goliath who is wounded by the sight of David's excellent beauty: for example, Donatello and Caravaggio. Such works produce impressively homoerotic interpretations already prior and parallel to the scholarly interpretations of the 20th and 21st century.

In my dissertation I apply several ways of queer readings to selected passages of the Hebrew Bible, namely the legal texts concerning male homoeroticism (Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13) and cross-dressing (Deut 22:5), the creation accounts (Genesis 1 and 2), the stories of Sodom (Genesis 19:1-28), Gibeah (Judges 19), Ham and Noah (Genesis 9:20-25), Saul, Goliath, David and Jonathan (Books of Samuel), as well as Ruth, Naomi and Boaz (Book of Ruth).

Furthermore I analyze the homoerotic Jewish interpretations of Joseph, the beautiful young man in the Hebrew Bible: In Rabbinic Judaism, Joseph is described as an effeminate youth whose behaviour does not

correspond to gender norms at that time. There is not one queer method to read biblical passages, but a great variety of queer approaches that are grounded in certain interpretations of the term queer. For example, the Song of Songs, Qohelet 4:9-12 and Ruth 1,16-17 can be interpreted today as queer, biblical counter-texts in relation to contemporary conservative ideas of marriage, which are still cemented through certain interpretations of the Genesis creation accounts, whereby queer is understood in a general sense as against the dominant norm .

A queer reading of King David's exposure while dancing during the transport of the ark to Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 6 focuses on his erotic behaviour before G*d which is extremely unusual, thus queer, for the readers back then and today and remembers that G*d is on the side of persons like David. Queer interpretations contribute to the goal altogether of enabling more queer (gay, lesbian, bisexual, polyamorous etc.) ways of living today.



Donatello, David Simeon Solomon, David and Jonathan Philip Hermogenes Calderon, Ruth and Naomi

QUEER READINGS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

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