

Judith Buber Agassi

Why do We Still Have to Think about Equal Opportunity for Women?

Some people claim that in a society where the equal rights of all persons are protected by the Basic Law there no longer exists a problem of equality for women. In my opinion equality for women as a group in society has not yet been achieved anywhere except in two North-European countries and even there not quite. There is no equality for women unless they make up a nearly equal number in all levels of most occupations, including technology and engineering, high-tech, business, legal, including the judiciary, in the public service, in science and in politics. Obviously, this is still not the case.

Several factors have prevented this from happening. First, cultural and religious traditions oppose it. Second, the entry for women, especially into the high positions of many prestigious occupations is prevented by the men in power. Third, most girls are given less educational opportunities than their brothers. Fourth, many men consider it the exclusive duty of women to take care of the household and to care for children, the old and the infirm. Finally and most importantly, very few societies have made sufficient arrangements for mothers and fathers to have a paid parental leave at the time of the birth of a child and few supply affordable quality daycare for preschool children and care for nursery-school and young schoolchildren in the afternoon.

In order to improve matters, what is needed is, first of all to examine the obstacles to equality of women posed by these already mentioned five factors and discuss the question, how can they best be overcome here and now.