

QUEERING SPIRITUALITY

Religion, Belief, and Beyond

Though many people use the words *religion* and *spirituality* interchangeably, many do not. When pressed, many draw a distinction between spirituality, which for them involves a belief in and a quest for that which is beyond the purely observable or empirical dimensions of life and existence, and religion, which they more often associate with specific traditions, with histories, often directive dogmas, and some degrees of literalism and systems of reward and punishment for “sins” (which may be defined quite differently by various organized religions).

In what follows, particularly in the first three religions we will consider, the so-called **Abrahamic faiths**, much about homosexuality and other forms of queerness hinges on the reading of scriptures (holy books) and commentary on them by scholars. There are comparatively few verses in any of the scriptures of these religions specifically about homosexuality (and, by extension, other nonheteronormative sexual identities and activities), given how much debate has been had and, in some cases, how much blood has been spilled over the issues. Language about gender identity tends to focus on what various religions prescribe as appropriate to the binary of male and female and rarely addresses the kinds of issues transgender people face in their lives.

THE ABRAHAMIC FAITHS: MONOTHEISM IN THE DESERT (AND THE GARDENS)

What They Share in Common: Lot/Lut and What Happened in Sodom

One thing all three of the Abrahamic faiths — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — share, especially with regard to issues involving queerness, is the story of Lot (Lut in Islamic tradition) and the city of Sodom. It is from the name of the city, Sodom, that the English terms *sodomy* and *sodomite* are derived. Because of the sins of its people, this city (along with some others) was destroyed in fire and brimstone by a vengeful God.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING AND VIEWING

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