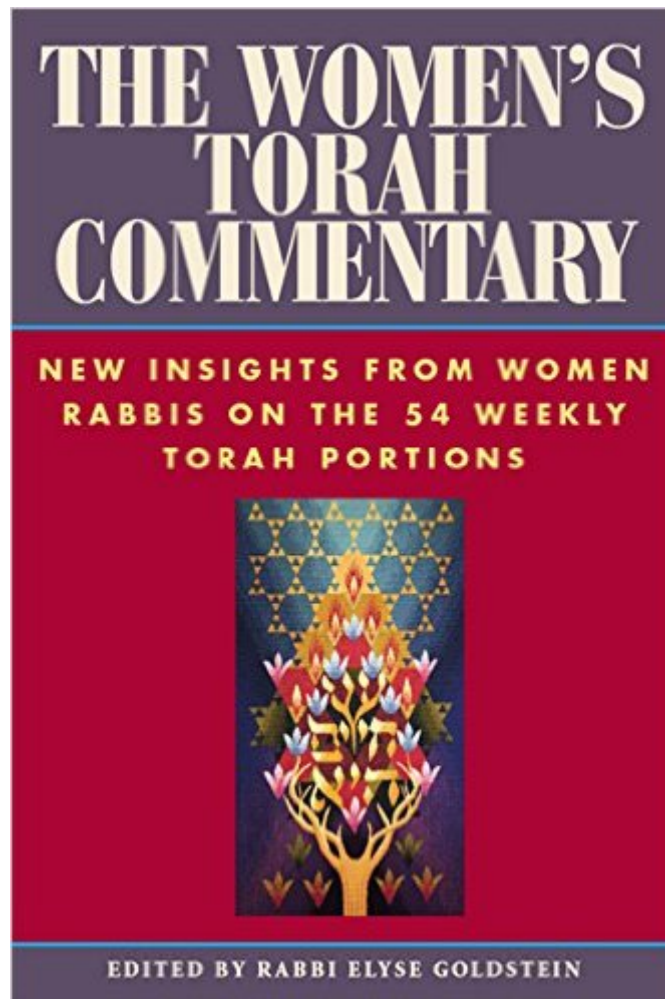


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The Women's Torah Commentary: New Insights From Women Rabbis On The 54 Weekly Torah Portions



Synopsis

Women rabbis are changing the face of Judaism. Discover how their interpretations of the Torah can enrich your perspective. "Rich and engaging" makes available to a wide readership the collective wisdom of women who have changed the face of Judaism." —Judith Plaskow, author, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*; Professor of Religious Studies, Manhattan College Here, for the first time, women's unique experiences and perspectives are applied to the entire Five Books of Moses, offering all of us the first comprehensive commentary by women. In this groundbreaking book, more than 50 women rabbis come together to offer us inspiring insights on the Torah, in a week-by-week format. Included are commentaries by the first women ever ordained in the Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservative movements, and by many other women across these denominations who serve in the rabbinate in a variety of ways. This rich resource offers new perspectives to inspire all of us to gain deeper meaning from the Torah and a heightened appreciation of Judaism. A major contribution to modern biblical commentary. The gift of choice for every young woman's bat mitzvah, and for anyone wanting a new, exciting view of Torah. Contributing Rabbis: Rebecca T. Alpert • Lia Bass • Miriam Carey Berkowitz • Elizabeth Bolton • Analia Bortz • Sharon Brous • Judith Gary Brown • Nina Beth Cardin • Diane Aronson Cohen • Sandra J. Cohen • Cynthia A. Culpeper • Lucy H.F. Dinner • Lisa A. Edwards • Amy Eilberg • Sue Levi Elwell • Rachel Esserman • Helaine Ettinger • Susan Fendrick • Lori Forman • Dayle A. Friedman • Elyse D. Frishman • Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer • Shoshana Gelfand • Laura Geller • Elyse M. Goldstein • Julie K. Gordon • Claire Magidovitch Green • Rosette Barron Haim • Jill Hammer • Karyn D. Kedar • Sarra Levine • Valerie Lieber • Ellen Lippmann • Sheryl Nosan • Stacy K. Offner • Sara Paasche-Orlow • Barbara Rosman Penzner • Hara E. Person • Audrey S. Pollack • Sally J. Priesand • Geela-Rayzel Raphael • Laura M. Rappaport • Debra Judith Robbins • Rochelle Robins • Gila Colman Ruskin • Sandy Eisenberg Sasso • Ilene Schneider • Rona Shapiro • Michal Shekel • Beth J. Singer • Sharon L. Sobel • Ruth H. Sohn • Julie Ringold Spitzer • Shira Stern • Pamela Wax • Nancy Wechsler-Azen • Nancy H. Wiener • Elana Zaiman

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Customer Reviews

When you picture a rabbi, do you picture a young, beardless, mother of three? You should. As Rabbi Goldstein writes in the introduction, Abraham Geiger wrote in 1837 that "our whole religious life will profit from the beneficial influence which feminine hearts will bestow upon it." Rabbi Elyse Goldstein, a 1983 HUC-JIR grad, is the leader of the Kolel Adult Center for Liberal Jewish Learning program in Toronto, a program that is so successful that they are building their own building. She wanted to be a rabbi since the day of her Bat Mitzvah ceremony. She knows that divrei Torah by women provide a unique perspective. I predict that her book will be the bat mitzvah gift book of choice in this decade. Over fifty, YES FIFTY, women rabbis teach the reader with inspiring commentaries, and NOT JUST feminist commentaries on the parsha's that deal with the Hebrew matriarchs. No, this is in the weekly Torah portion format, starting with Bereshit/Genesis' first chapter (Bereshit) and ending with Davarim/Deuteronomy's last chapter (Vzot Habrachah/The Death of Moses). The week by week format is an asset, and makes it an excellent resource. And not only does the book contain enlightening commentaries, but there are nearly half page biographies for each of the rabbis who provide the commentaries. These bios provide as much enjoyment as the commentaries, since they provide a profile of each woman's path to the rabbinate. The Foreword is by Rabbi Amy Eilberg (JTS, 85). In it she lays the groundwork for women in the rabbinate (beginning with Regina Jonas in 1935, Sally Preisand in 1972 and Sandy Sasso in 1974) and its feminization.

Is part of your Sabbath preparation or observance picking up a book and reading a short (5-10 minute) essay about the parasha of the week --- or would you like it to be? If so *The Women's Torah Commentary* (Rabbi Elyse Goldstein, ed., Jewish Lights, 2000) may be just what you could use. The book has 54 essays --- one for each Torah portion. Each essay in this anthology is written by a different ordained woman Rabbi, or one who is soon to be ordained. The book provides a distinctly feminist analysis. The editor wanted writers who "would sing the song of women - to speak in a woman's voice." And from what I've seen, there seems relatively little of the male-bashing that sometime mars feminist analysis, especially of the Humash. Many essays deal with women characters, but since we are often told very little about them, the writers often reach into midrash to flesh these characters out, and then add some imaginings of their own to the mix to draw their lessons. This is seen for example in the discussion of the unnamed wife of Noah, and in the treatment of Asenath, the wife of Joseph. Of course, many readings have no women present, but that does not stymie a feminist analysis. One imaginative treatment is of parasha Pekudei, where the author draws a parallel between the construction of the mishkan (desert Tabernacle), and the human birthing process. Not every essay is a gem. The one on Tzav stuck me as uninspired, with the reference to women little more than pasted in. Still, there is a ringing affirmation of Eve's conduct, an intriguing connection drawn between kashrut and eating disorders, a fine comparison on the Rachel/Leah and Jacob/Esau struggles, and an inspiring piece on "Community as a Sacred Space" to name just a few of the winners.

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