



Biblical Women in the Midrash: A Sourcebook

Naomi Mara Hyman

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There is a rapidly growing body of literature addressing women and Jewish tradition, much of which seeks to supplement Jewish texts such as the Talmud and midrash where female voices are generally absent. *Biblical Women in the Midrash: A Sourcebook* also seeks to influence the tradition by both providing an opening for women to study the Bible and rabbinic midrash, and by adding women's voices to the body of Jewish writings in the form of modern midrashim. Naomi Hyman's inspiration to compile this book was informed by her own reconnection to Judaism as an adult and her subsequent venture into text study. "No matter how hard I studied those texts, I now understand, I would never find my own voice, my own experience in them except perhaps vicariously." But she does not advocate abandoning Jewish tradition; rather, she strongly encourages readers to personalize their relationship with the rabbis and Jewish texts. "Sometimes there are disagreements, serious ones?but if the connection is strong, you stay with it. You teach one another about the ways in which you experience the world. You learn to see the world through each other's eyes."

The book opens with an introduction to Bible, midrash, and Jewish study in order to teach basic study skills and encourage further, independent learning. Individual chapters on several biblical women follow, each providing three elements: the biblical text pertaining to the woman; the rabbinic midrashim, which comment or expand on the story or character; and modern midrashim about the same woman, in the form of poems and stories by some of the most influential, contemporary Jewish women thinkers, including Alicia Ostriker, Marge Piercy, Judith Plaskow, and Ellen Umansky, among others. In this way, readers can compare the voices of the rabbis with the voices of today's Jewish women, and refer to the original text to draw their own conclusions.

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