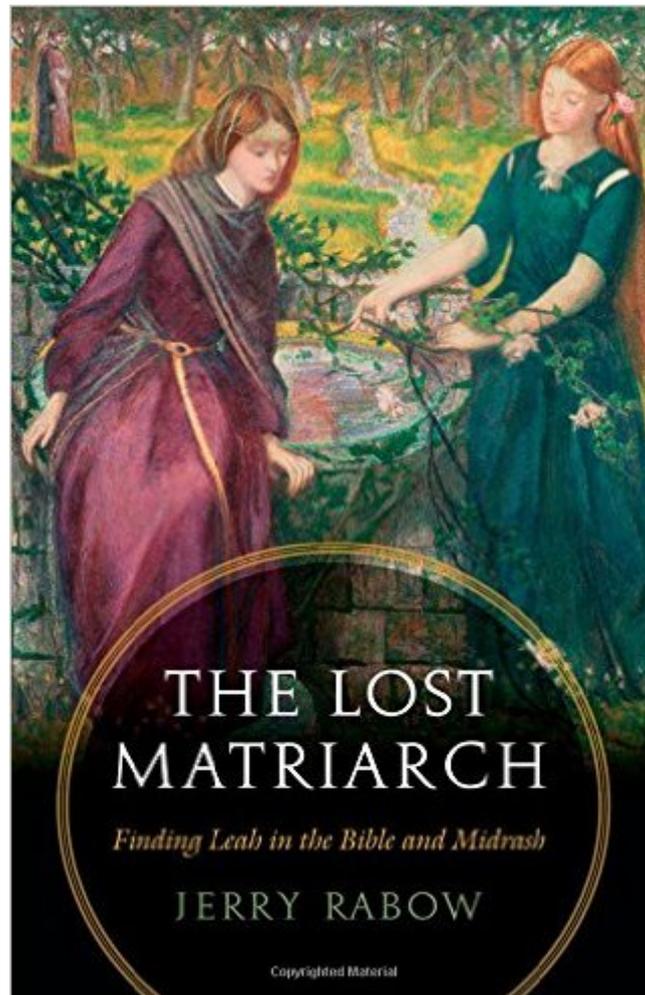


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The Lost Matriarch: Finding Leah In The Bible And Midrash



Synopsis

The Lost Matriarch offers a unique response to the sparse and puzzling biblical treatment of the matriarch Leah. Although Leah is a major figure in the book of Genesis, the biblical text allows her only a single word of physical description and two lines of direct dialogue. The Bible tells us little about the effects of her lifelong struggles in an apparently loveless marriage to Jacob, the husband she shares with three other wives, including her beautiful younger sister, Rachel. Fortunately, two thousand years of traditional and modern commentators have produced many fascinating interpretations (midrash) that reveal the far richer story of Leah hidden within the text. Through Jerry Rabow's weaving of biblical text and midrash, readers learn the lessons of the remarkable Leah, who triumphed over adversity and hardship by living a life of moral heroism. The Lost Matriarch reveals Leah's full story and invites readers into the delightful, provocative world of creative rabbinic and literary commentary. By experiencing these midrashic insights and techniques for reading "between the lines," readers are introduced to what for many will be an exciting new method of personal Bible interpretation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Having studied the story of Leah and Rachel in Torah class, I thought Mr. Rabow's book might be of interest. It was far more! The Torah study felt like snorkeling- stay on the surface, dive down for some additional insight, then surface again and go on. Reading "The Lost Matriarch" was like scuba diving- go deep, stay as long as you like, and gather wisdom from Talmud and Mishnah. The story

as told by Mr. Rabow was illuminating as it opened up the wonders of the Talmud.

this is a tender, beautifully written story of an almost forgotten woman who played an essential role in the history of the Jewish people as depicted in the Bible. What is so helpful to the reader's desire to know more about the Biblical Leah is the author's search through the Talmud for all the embellishments, speculations and wisdom of the Jewish sages as they filled in the vacuum left open by the Bible's brief references to her. But what I found particularly satisfying is the author's own views of how this woman, by virtue of how she followed her own values, is largely an overlooked heroine in the epic of the Jewish people.

A great book for readers particularly interested in Leah but also more generally interested in the style and process of midrash. Many Jews don't understand what midrash is. I was one of them and this book helped me learn about this important, delightful, and often fanciful strand of Jewish literature.

This is a most unusual and fascinating book. The Leah of the title is the enigmatic, long-suffering, Biblical ancestress of the Jewish people. Her family saga includes jealousy, deceit, betrayal, theft, sexual abuse, and even murder, along with altruism and love. Those of us whose last exposure to the book of Genesis was in Sunday school may not realize how much raw emotion and violence are packed into the Biblical tales of Abraham and his descendants including Leah. How Jewish sages and scholars down through the ages have tried to reconcile these tales with belief in a benevolent god is the subject of the book. The author vividly recounts each episode and then provides a sampling of the various interpretations given by prominent rabbis and other authorities from antiquity to recent times. Since the Bible provides little information on the motivations of its principal characters, the scholars must engage in an imaginative reconstruction of their thoughts and emotions. What accounts for the multiple intrigues of Leah, her unwilling husband Jacob, and her sister Rachel, who subsequently becomes Jacob's second of four wives; and how can these acts be squared with the religious precepts of the Bible? To answer such questions the scholars not only analyse the clues in the text but fill in the back stories of what must have happened to provoke the action. This is very much the way in which modern day critics seek explanations for the madness of Hamlet or other great literary puzzles. Cogent comments by the author pull together the stories and interpretations, making this a very readable approach to a profound subject.

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