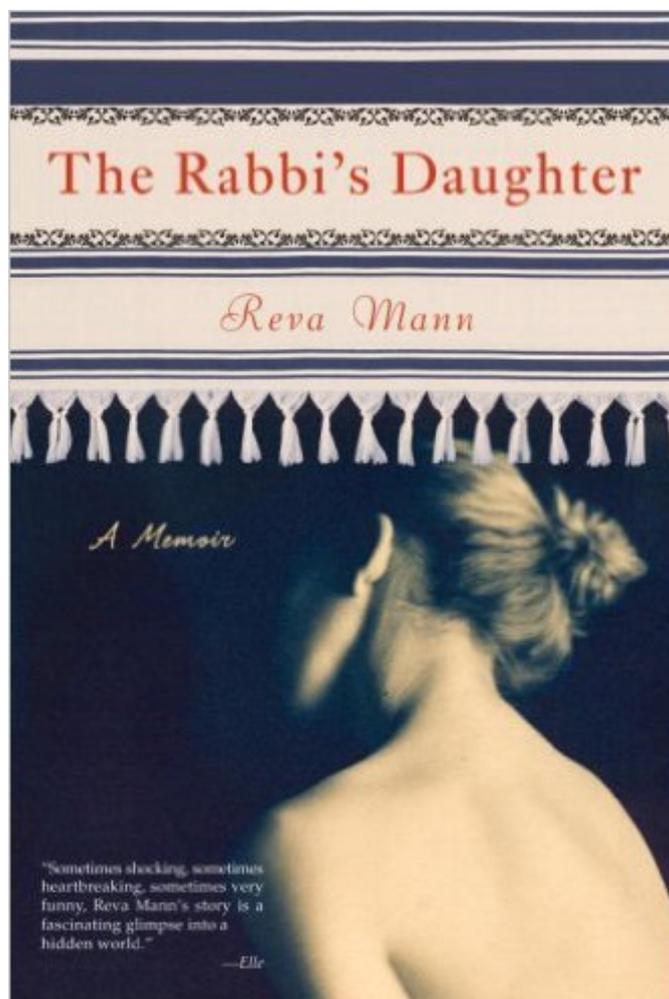


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The Rabbi's Daughter: A Memoir



Synopsis

In this honest, daring, and compulsively readable memoir, Reva Mann paints a portrait of herself as a young woman on the edge of either revelation or self-destruction. The daughter of a highly respected London rabbi, Reva was a wild child, spiralling into a whirlwind of sex and drugs by the time she reached adolescence. But as a young woman, Reva had a startling mystical epiphany that led her to a women's yeshivah in Israel, and eventually to marriage to the devoutly religious Torah scholar she thought would take her to ever greater heights of spirituality. But can the path to spiritual fulfillment ever be compatible with the ecstasies of the flesh or with the everyday joys of intimacy and pleasure to which she is also strongly drawn? With unflinching candor, Reva shares her struggle to carve out a life that encompasses all the impulses at war within herself. An eye-opening glimpse into the world of the ultra-Orthodox and their elaborately coded rituals for eating, sleeping, bathing, and lovemaking, as well as a deeply personal rumination on identity, faith, and self-acceptance, *The Rabbi's Daughter* is at its heart a universal story, a journey toward redemption that is an unforgettable read.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Spoilers are included. This book is not memorable for its literary style. The writing is mediocre. The story is one you hear more and more frequently, about life as a woman in the ultra Orthodox Jewish world. Most of them say pretty much the same things, and each tends to confirm the other's story. A woman's goal and value is in her ability to bear and raise children, and create a Torah home for her Torah student husband. The unfortunate representations of marital sexual relations do back up

those nasty rumors that have been going around. Of course, all the Orthodox people who review the book say, "But that's not the way it is!" And maybe it isn't for everyone, but certainly often enough for it to be a common occurrence when people finally feel free to talk about it without having to make it pretty "for the goyim". (Non-Jews or, to the ultra Orthodox, Jews who are not ultra Orthodox) Also, as a memoir rather than a study of Judaism, remember that the impression of Judaism is the author's, and is not intended as a well rounded exploration of Judaism. It doesn't need to be; after all, it's a memoir. This concept seems to be difficult for some people to grasp. Unfortunately, I had almost no ability to relate to the author. She's unlikable. Her expectations are unreal, and therefore doomed to fail. I was particularly dismayed by her apparent lack of concern about the effects of her behavior on her children, when those effects were not going unnoticed by her. She is a person who is stimulated by extremes and novelty, so the likelihood that she is going to find deep satisfaction in a religion based on structured minutia is a predictable failure. Yes, she went to an extreme form of Judaism, but the more extreme the Judaism, the more regimented it is.

Much like Deborah Feldman's story of growing up in Satmar Williamsburg ("Unorthodox"), Reva Mann's depiction of her lifelong Jewish journey is rife with dysfunctional family issues and a deep-seeded struggle to be loved in a way that all of the activities and gentleman she engages in can never satiate. Like Feldman, it seems like Mann's problems do not stem from her religious affiliations directly, but rather from her intentional relation to Judaism in light of her family problems. I halfheartedly recommend this book - not as a tome that sheds (biased) light on Orthodox Jewish life in any way, but rather as a memoir of a broken childhood and a (unresolved) struggle to become a whole adult woman. "The Rabbi's Daughter" is not particularly well written - I have to agree with the reviewer who said RM should have employed a ghost writer. Her descriptions are often quite cliché and her wording makes her sound triter than she hopefully is in real life. Much of this memoir is devoted to the author's tragic and compulsive desire to be loved, and while I would be sympathetic, she does not seem to learn anything from her experiences and constantly repeats dangerous and unhealthy patterns with little remorse. By the end of the book [spoiler] when she is whining about her boyfriend taking comfort, at his brother's funeral, in her Hasidic ex-husband's piety and empathy rather than in her, and the effort it takes for her to put her own jealousy aside at this moment of extreme tragedy (suicide bombing victim), I had had just about enough. It was very difficult for me to be sympathetic to Ms. Mann due to her constant selfishness, jealousy, and lack of critical consciousness about herself and her experiences.

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