



Praise Her Works: Conversations with Biblical Women

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This rich collection celebrates 23 biblical women, from the familiar Sarah, Miriam, Ruth, and Esther, to the more mysterious Hatzleponi mother of Samson) and the unnamed “Wife of Ovadiah.” Based on the 13th-century Yemenite Midrash ha-Gadol (literally, the Great Midrash)—a work only partially translated into English and, until now, virtually unknown to American Jews—this new volume presents stories, commentaries, original monologues, and discussion topics touching upon the lives of Jewish women today.

Penina Adelman became captivated by Midrash ha-Gadol while seeking a new ritual to perform before her daughter’s bat mitzvah. She eventually enlisted a group of writers to join her in studying the midrash. These women agreed to step inside the Bible and “become” some of their ancestors. The resulting book is an unusual encounter among remarkable biblical women— from different time periods and walks of life—who are able to converse directly with one another and the reader. As the writers probe the hearts and minds of the biblical characters, they provide an insightful, behind-the-scenes look into the relationships of women whose feelings and actions have inspired readers throughout the ages. This book is a beautiful example of the way today’s scholars are using midrash to weave together Jewish tradition and modern society. In the original Yemenite midrash, each of the women is linked to a line from the poem in Proverbs, “Eishet Chayil” (Women of Valor)—the poem often sung at Jewish weddings by the groom to the bride and at the traditional Shabbat table by a husband to his wife, and recited at a Jewish woman’s funeral.

In this new book, the reader is invited to experience the blending of the familiar poem with the previously unexplored treasure trove of Midrash ha-Gadol and the new voices for each character. This extraordinary combination makes it ideal for Jewish educators, teen and adult study groups, readers of midrash, and scholars in the fields of women’s studies and contemporary spirituality. It also makes a lovely gift for brides, mothers, and grandmothers.

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