

Women in Religious Leadership

Recommended Reading

***Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics* by Rachel Adler (1997)**

This is a pioneering work on what it means to “engender” Jewish tradition—how women’s full inclusion can and must transform our understanding and practice of Jewish law, prayer, and marriage. Adler’s writing is passionate, sharply intelligent and offers a serious study of traditional biblical and rabbinic texts.

***Women of the Wall: Claiming Sacred Ground at Judaism's Holy Site* edited by Phyllis Chesler and Rivka Haut (2002)**

Documents the legendary grassroots and legal struggle of a determined group of Jewish women from Israel, America, and other parts of the world--known as the Women of the Wall--to win the right to pray together as a group out loud, wear ritual objects, and read from Torah scrolls at Israel's Western Wall.

***A Jewish Feminine Mystique? Jewish Women in Postwar America* edited by Hasia R. Diner, Shira Kohn, and Rachel Kranson (2010)**

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Jewish-raised Betty Friedan struck out against a postwar American culture that pressured women to play the role of subservient housewives. However, Friedan never acknowledged that many American women refused to retreat from public life during these years. Now, *A Jewish Feminine Mystique?* examines how Jewish women sought opportunities and created images that defied the stereotypes and prescriptive ideology of the "feminine mystique."

***The Sacred Calling: Four Decades of Women in the Rabbinate* edited by Rabbi Rebecca Einstein Schorr and Rabbi Alysa Mendelson Graf (2016)**

In this anthology, rabbis and scholars from across the Jewish world reflect back on the historic significance of women in the rabbinate and explore issues related to both the professional and personal lives of women rabbis.

***Chapters of the Heart: Jewish Women Sharing the Torah of Our Lives* edited by Sue Levi Elwell and Nancy Fuchs Kreimer (2013)**

In this candid collection, twenty Jewish women—a formidable group of feminist rabbis, educators, scholars — turn back to critical points in their lives and show how Jewish texts offered help and understanding.

***Book of Blessings: A New Prayer Book for the Weekdays, the Sabbath, and the New Moon Festival* by Marcia Falk (1996)**

A collection of blessings, poems, meditations, and rituals presented in English and Hebrew offers a traditional perspective to weekday, Sabbath, and New Moon festival observances.

***A Spiritual Life: A Jewish Feminist Journey* by Merle Feld (1999)**

Explores the complex facets of a Jewish woman's spiritual coming-of-age, capturing the emotional and spiritual reality of contemporary Jews as well as religious seekers of all types.

***The Five Books of Miriam: A Woman's Commentary on the Torah* by Ellen Frankel (1996)**

Paralleling the Torah's traditional division, each section of this biblical commentary is divided into a summary of the weekly reading and includes a response written from the female perspective and told through the voices of biblical women.

***Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of their Stories* by Tikva Frymer-Kensky (2002)**

A noted biblical scholar reinterprets the women of the Bible from a feminist point of view as seen in the context of both their own times and modern-day society, discussing the stories of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Ruth, Jezebel, Dinah, and others and examining the meaning of their lives and the themes of the stories.

***The Women's Torah Commentary: New Insights from Women Rabbis on the 54 Weekly Torah Portions* edited by Elyse Goldstein (2000)**

Discusses each Torah portion with respect to women, explaining how its teachings and the lives and motives of biblical women can be relevant to modern feminist worship. See also *The Women's Haftarah Commentary: New Insights from Women Rabbis on the 54 Weekly Haftarah Portions, the 5 Megillot & Special Shabbatot* (2004).

***New Jewish Feminism: Probing the Past, Forging the Future* edited by Elyse Goldstein (2008)**

This anthology looks at the growth and accomplishments of Jewish feminism and what that means for Jewish women today and tomorrow. It features the voices of women from every area of Jewish life—the Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, Orthodox and Jewish Renewal movements; rabbis, congregational leaders, artists, writers, community service professionals, academics, and chaplains, from the United States, Canada, and Israel—addressing the important issues that concern Jewish women. See also: *Seek Her Out: A Textual Approach to the Study of Women and Judaism* (2003) and *ReVisions: Seeing Torah Through a Feminist Lens* (1998).

***She Who Dwells Within: A Feminist Vision of a Renewed Judaism* by Lynn Gottlieb (1995)**

A high-spirited woman rabbi assesses contemporary Judaism and breathes new life into classic tradition by drawing on Jewish, feminist, ecological and Native American sources.

***On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition* by Blu Greenberg (1981)**

A classic for more than 30 years, this thought-provoking volume explores the role of Jewish women in the synagogue, in the family, and in the secular world. Greenberg offers ways to change present Jewish practices so that they more readily reflect feminine equality.

***The Hebrew Priestess: Ancient and New Visions of Jewish Women's Spiritual Leadership* by Jill Hammer (2015)**

It has been over 40 years since rabbinical seminaries began ordaining women as rabbis. But women have played a role in Jewish religious leadership from the days of the Bible and even before. Hammer delineates 13 models of spiritual leadership - among them prophetess, weaver, drummer, shrinekeeper, midwife, mother, maiden, witch, and fool - and shows how each model was manifest in ancient times, its continuation through Jewish history, and how women in our day are following that path. See also: *Sisters at Sinai: New Tales of Biblical Women* (2001).

***Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice* by Judith Hauptman (1998)**

A noted Talmudic scholar reinterprets ancient Hebrew law from a feminist sensibility, analyzing the treatment of women's issues in Rabbinic tradition and explaining how the patriarchal teachings of the Talmud incorporated certain women's rights into Jewish law.

***Kindling the Flame: Reflections on Ritual, Faith, and Family* by Roberta Israeloff (1998)**

The author shares her personal, lifelong spiritual journey of faith, which led away from organized Judaism and back again, and acknowledges the power of tradition while recognizing the need to reinterpret that which must be passed on.

***Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination, 1889-1985* by Pamela S. Nadell (1998)**

Presents a history of the debates surrounding women's battle to become rabbis and religious teachers. See also: *American Jewish Women's History: A Reader* (2003) and *Women and American Judaism: Historical Perspectives* (2001).

***Life on the Fringes: A Feminist Journey Towards Traditional Rabbinic Ordination* by Haviva Ner-David (2000)**

Part memoir and part halakhic commentary, tells the story of Ner-David's integration of feminism and Orthodox Judaism over a lifetime and argues for the ordination of women as Orthodox rabbis. See also: *Chanah's Voice: A Rabbi Wrestles with Gender, Commandment, and the Women's Rituals of Baking, Bathing, and Brightening* (2014).

***Inventing Jewish Ritual* by Vanessa L. Ochs (2007)**

Invites readers to explore how Jewish practice can be more meaningful through renewing, reshaping, and even creating new rituals, such as naming ceremonies for welcoming baby girls, healing services, Miriam's cup, mitzvah days, egalitarian wedding practices, and commitment ceremonies. See also: *Sarah Laughed: Modern Lessons from the Wisdom & Stories of Biblical Women* (2005) and *Words on Fire: One Woman's Journey into the Sacred* (1990).

***Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* by Judith Plaskow (1990)**

A feminist critique of Judaism as a patriarchal tradition and an exploration of the increasing involvement of women in naming and shaping Jewish tradition.

***Yentl's Revenge: The Next Wave of Jewish Feminism* edited by Danya Ruttenberg (2001)**

Thanks in large part to the struggles of their activist foremothers, today's young Jewish women have a dizzying array of spiritual options. *Yentl's Revenge* chronicles a range of experiences lived by an entire generation of women, from Judeo-pagan witches to young Orthodox mothers, from rabbis to sex educators. Contributors ponder Jewish transgenderdom, Jewish body image, Jewish punk, the stereotype of the Jewish American Princess, intermarriage, circumcision, faith, and intolerance. See also: *Nurture the Wow: Finding Spirituality in the Frustration, Boredom, Tears, Poop, Desperation, Wonder, and Radical Amazement of Parenting* (2016) and *Surprised by God: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Religion* (2009).

***The Contemporary Torah: A Gender-Sensitive Adaptation of the JPS Translation* edited by David E. Stein et al (2006)**

This ground-breaking work, an adaptation of the acclaimed JPS translation of the Torah (1962), will appeal to readers who are interested in a historically based representation of social gender roles in the Bible, as well as to those who have become accustomed to gender-sensitive English in other aspects of their lives.