



## ***Unorthodox:* The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots** by Deborah Feldman

Traces the author's upbringing in the Hasidic community of Satmar in Brooklyn's Williamsburg, describing the strict rules that governed every aspect of her life, denial of a traditional education and arranged marriage at seventeen to a stranger before the birth of her son led to her plan to escape her cloistered world.

### See also:

***Exodus: A Memoir*** (2014) in which Feldman has embarked on a triumphant journey of self-discovery, a journey in which she begins life anew as a single mother, an independent woman, and a religious refugee.

The Netflix series ***Unorthodox*** (2020), a TV drama about a Hasidic Jewish woman in Brooklyn who flees to Berlin from an arranged marriage and is taken in by a group of musicians, until her past comes calling; inspired by Deborah Feldman's memoir.

### **FURTHER READING:**

#### ***The Pious Ones: The World of Hasidim and Their Battles with America* by Joseph Berger (182)**

A New York Times journalist and author takes readers inside the notoriously insular world of the Hasidim to explore their origins, beliefs, and struggles--and the social and political implications of their expanding presence in America.

#### ***Becoming un-Orthodox: Stories of ex-Hasidic Jews* by Lynn Davidman (300.10)**

Based on her in-depth conversations with over forty male and female Haredi "defectors," Lynn Davidman, the Beren Distinguished Professor of Modern Jewish Studies at the University of Kansas, explores what prompts some ultra-Orthodox Jews to abandon their insulated lives and shed their distinctive clothes and behaviors to enter the secular world.

#### ***All Who Go Do Not Return* by Shulem Deen (B)**

A former Skverer Hasid openly documents his harrowing loss of faith, which forced him into a life of deception, while providing a thought-provoking look at one of the most insular Hasidic sects in the U.S.

#### ***Keep Your Wives Away from Them: Orthodox Women, Unorthodox Desires: An Anthology* edited by Miryam Kabakov (305)**

Draws on the voices of women and genderqueer people who have reconciled their sexual identity with Orthodox Judaism, documenting not only the coming out process but also how these individuals build families and participate in mainstream Orthodox Jewish communities.

***Hasidic Williamsburg: A Contemporary American Hasidic Community* by George Kranzler (182)**

Presents the findings of a decade of research into the survival and life-style of Hasidic Williamsburg as a functioning community and portrays the desperate struggle and relentless efforts of its leaders to stem the progressive disintegration of the Jewish neighborhood.

***Becoming Eve: My Journey from Ultra-Orthodox Rabbi to Transgender Woman* by Abby Stein (B)**

A former member of Brooklyn's founding Hasidic Jewish family traces the remarkable story of how she transitioned from a non-English speaking rabbinic leader to a woman and outspoken advocate for gender freedom.

***The New American Judaism: How Jews Practice Their Religion Today* by Jack Wertheimer (300.10)**

A leading expert provides an engaging firsthand portrait of American Judaism today.

## **FICTION READ-ALIKES:**

***The Romance Reader* by Pearl Abraham**

Wishing she could enjoy the freedoms and pleasures so casually enjoyed by ordinary women, Rachel, and Orthodox rabbi's daughter, anticipates her arranged marriage and imagines what her life will be like. See also *The Seventh Beggar* and *Giving Up America*.

***Disobedience* by Naomi Alderman**

Learning that her Orthodox Jewish rabbi father has passed away, Manhattan single woman Ronit Krushka returns to the home she fled years earlier and reconnects with a beloved cousin and a forbidden childhood sweetheart, only to become a threat to her former community. The movie adaptation, starring Rachel Weisz and Rachel McAdams, was released in 2018 and is available on Amazon Prime Video.

***Hush* by Eishes Chayil**

After remembering the cause of her best friend Devory's suicide at age nine, Gittel is determined to raise awareness of sexual abuse in her Borough Park, New York, community, despite the rules of Chassidim that require her to be silent.

***Invisible City* by Julia Dahl**

Investigating the murder of a Hasidic Jewish woman who because of religious laws will be buried without an autopsy, journalist Rebekah Roberts intercedes to prevent the woman's killer from getting away with the crime. See also *Conviction* and *Run You Down*.

***On Division* by Goldie Goldbloom**

Anticipating the birth of her first great-grandchild, a 57-year-old Chasidic woman in Williamsburg, Brooklyn feels exposed and ashamed by a late-in-life pregnancy that slowly separates her from her community.

***The Marrying of Chani Kaufman* by Eve Harris**

Chani Kaufman and Baruch Levy are anxious about their arranged marriage and the mysteries of the wedding night in this glimpse into the strict faith and traditions of an ultra-Orthodox Jewish community seemingly out of place in a modern world.

***I Am Forbidden* by Anouk Markovits**

Set inside the insular Hasidic sect, the Satmar, two devoted sisters are forced apart when one begins to question their religion's ancient doctrine.

***The Outside World* by Tova Mirvis**

Follows the whimsical courtship and marriage of Bryan and Tzippy, the former of whom astonishes his family by rejecting their liberal way of life in favor of a strict Orthodox lifestyle, and the latter, who longs to escape the expectations of religious structure and familial obligation. See also: *The Ladies Auxiliary*, *Visible City* and *The Book of Separation: A Memoir*.

***The Chosen* by Chaim Potok**

It's the spring of 1944 and fifteen-year-olds Reuven Malter and Danny Saunders have lived five blocks apart all their lives. But they've never met, not until the day an accident during a baseball game sparks an unlikely friendship. Soon these two boys - one expected to become a Hasidic rebbe, the other at ease with secular America - are drawn into one another's worlds despite one father's strong opposition. See also *The Promise* and *My Name is Asher Lev*.

***An Unorthodox Match* by Naomi Ragen**

Struggling financially and spiritually in the aftermath of his wife's death, a Talmud scholar enters a marriage of convenience with a secular woman who would overcome personal tragedy by joining Brooklyn's Orthodox community. See other novels by Naomi Ragen about the Orthodox community.

## **TV & FILM:**

### ***Making Unorthodox***

A look at the making of the Netflix series including an interview with Deborah Feldman. (21 minutes, available on Netflix)

### ***Menashe* (2017)**

Deep in the heart of New York's ultra-orthodox Hasidic Jewish community, Menashe - a kind, hapless grocery store clerk - struggles to make ends meet and responsibly parent his young son, Rieven, following his wife Leah's death. (available on Amazon Prime Video)

### ***One of Us* (2017)**

A documentary feature film that chronicles the lives of three ex-Hasidic Jews from Brooklyn. (available on Netflix)

### ***Shtisel* (2013-2014)**

The popular Israeli television series portrays a Haredi family living in an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of Jerusalem who reckons with love, loss and the doldrums of daily life. (2 seasons, available on Netflix)

### ***Srugim* (2008-2012)**

An Israeli television drama that depicts the lives of five religious single men and women, in their 30s, who reside in Jerusalem. (3 season, available on Amazon Prime Video)

### ***Trembling Before G-d* (2003)**

A documentary built around intimately told personal stories of Hasidic and Orthodox Jews who are gay or lesbian, the film portrays a group of people trying to reconcile their passionate love for Judaism and the Divine with the drastic biblical prohibitions that forbid homosexuality. (available on DVD from the Maxwell Abbell Library and on Amazon Prime Video)