

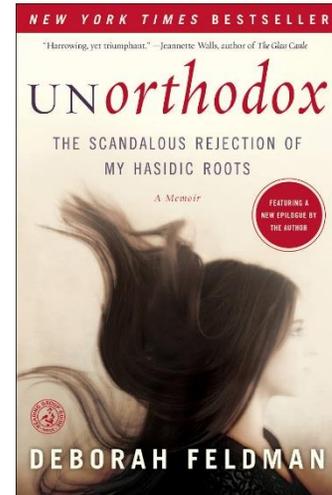
National Museum of American Jewish History
Quarterly Members', Docents', & Volunteers' Book Club

Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots
By Deborah Feldman

Discussed at NMAJH on September 27, 2016

At the age of 25 she published *The New York Times* Bestselling memoir, *Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots* (Simon and Schuster, 2012) and two years later she followed up with *Exodus*, a memoir of post-religious alienation and identity (Blue Rider Press, 2014.) Her work has been translated into Hebrew (Kinneret) and German (Secession Verlag). Currently she is working in two mediums, film and writing. She is most interested in exploring the intersection between globalization, religion, and identity. Deborah lives in Berlin, Germany with her ten-year-old son. Source:

<http://www.deborahfeldman.com/about.php> - retrieved 8/30/16



1. Does feminism have a role in orthodox Judaism? How does Rachel Adler address this question?
2. What are the silences in the book? What impression do you have of Feldman's husband?
3. How did Deborah's grandmother's experience compare to that of other Jewish immigrant women? (Paula Hyman article). Was it similar? Different? Why or why not?
4. In "Acknowledgments," Feldman thanks her mother for her support as Feldman was writing, yet in the book there are few references to her mother. Does this suggest anything about the author? Is she self-centered or could this have been an editorial decision?
5. How do the obligations/laws of the Satmar sect of Hasidic Judaism prepare men and women differently for life? Deborah's grandfather was involved in real estate along with his religious studies. What kind of work outside of the house were women prepared to do?
6. Many today regard arranged marriages as distasteful, yet today's divorce rate hovers around 50% of all marriages. What are the benefits or disadvantages of arranged marriages in the Satmar sect? In the secular world?
7. Why does sex play such a prominent role in *Unorthodox*?
8. Feldman found many examples of strong women in the literature that she read secretly, and she also ventured into Manhattan on her own. How did those experiences give her the courage to leave the Satmar sect or was she motivated by something different?
9. How would you describe Deborah Feldman based on this book?

Deborah Feldman has written a follow-up book: *Exodus*. See review:

<http://forward.com/culture/195634/deborah-feldman-isnt-telling-you-the-whole-story>