

Off the Derech: A Selected Bibliography

Books

Abraham, Pearl. ***Giving Up America*** (Riverhead Books, 1998). Deena and Daniel buy a house, but soon after their relationship disintegrates and Deena questions her marriage, her job and her other relationships.

Abraham, Pearl. ***The Romance Reader*** (Riverhead Books, 1995). Twelve-year-old Rachel Benjamin strains against the boundaries as the oldest daughter in a very strict Hasidic family.

Alderman, Naomi. ***Disobedience***. (Viking, 2006). Ronit Krushka never fit into her Orthodox London neighborhood or life as the daughter of its rabbinic leader. After his death, she returns to the community and re-examines her relationships, including one with another woman. Alderman presents a literary, thought-provoking journey of growth and acceptance.

Auslander, Shalom. ***Foreskin's Lament***. (Riverhead Books, 2007). Auslander's memoir relates the childhood experiences and interactions in the Orthodox community that led to his anger with God and to charting his own path. His caustic wit leaves the reader simultaneously hysterical and shocked.

Bavati, Robyn. ***Dancing in the Dark***. (Penguin Australia 2010; Flux (USA), 2013). Yehudit, Ditty, Cohen pursues her dreams of ballet secretly because her strictly Orthodox family would not approve of this activity. As her natural talent grows, so does her guilt at deceiving her family.

Chayil, Eishes. ***Hush*** (Walker & Company; 2010). Gittel's best friend commits suicide when they are ten-years-old, and she must come to terms with Devoiry's death and the community's stance on sexual abuse to move forward in her own life.

Fallenberg, Evan. ***Light Fell*** (Soho Press, 2008). After a homosexual affair, Joseph leaves his wife and five sons. At a Sabbath dinner for this 50th birthday, twenty years later, he hopes to reconcile with his adult children.

Feldman, Deborah. ***Unorthodox: the Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots***. (Simon & Schuster, 2012) This memoir of a young woman who leaves the Satmar community to pursue a writing career has received much attention, mostly criticism for its inaccuracies and omissions.

Finkelman, Yoel. ***Strictly Kosher Reading: Popular Literature and the Condition of Contemporary Orthodoxy***. (Academic Studies Press, 2011). An academic study of the reading habits of Orthodox Jews reveals a paradox: while the community prefers to set

itself apart from modern, secular culture, the popular literature “plays a critical role in helping Haredi Jews to understand themselves” within the context of the culture and society that they shun.

Goldstein, Rebecca. ***Mazel*** (Viking, 1995). Sasha Saunders reflects with nostalgia on her childhood in the shtetl and her time in the Warsaw Yiddish theater as her granddaughter Phoebe, who has decided to be Orthodox, is about to have a baby.

Havazelet, Ehud. ***Like Never Before*** (Farrar Straus Giroux, 1998). In ten interlinked stories, “Havazelet brilliantly probes the sources of David Birnbaum’s angst, from his abrasive, resentful, irascible personality to the stress of being caught between the Orthodox Jewish culture of his forebears and the lure of assimilation in the 1960s.” (*PW*)

Landress, Barbara Ann. ***Her Glory Within: Rejecting and Transforming Orthodoxy in Israeli and American Jewish Women’s Fiction*** (Academic Studies Press, 2012). Landress discusses her scholarly study and identifies several important themes in this genre of literature as well as “striking differences in attitudes toward Orthodoxy.

Levine, Stephanie Wellen. ***Mystics, Mavericks and Merrymakers: an Intimate Journey among Hasidic Girls***. (New York University Press, 2003). Levine lived in Crown Heights for a year and the results of her studies and interviews with Lubavitch girls “offers rich portraits of individual Hasidic young women and how they deal with the conflicts between the regimented society in which they live and the pull of mainstream American life.”

Mann, Reva. ***The Rabbi’s Daughter***. (Dial Press, 2007). “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. Ricocheting between extremes of rebellion and piety, she is on a difficult but life-changing journey to inner truth.”

Marcus, Jerry. ***Shoshana’s Song***. (Brittany Publications, Ltd., 2012). A high school girl in 1965 Brooklyn goes to Chicago to follow her dreams of freedom and individuality.

Margolese, Faranak. ***Off the Derech: How to Respond to the Challenge***. (Devora Publishing, 2005). The results of the author’s extensive research, including interviews with some of today’s most influential Jewish leaders, are analyzed in a clear and interesting exploration of her findings through surveys and discussions.

Markovits, Anouk. ***I Am Forbidden***. (Hogarth, 2012). In a family story that sweeps from Holocaust Romania to Paris to Williamsburg, strict adherence to Satmar dictates brings tragic results to the Stern family.

Potok, Chaim. ***The Chosen***. (Simon & Schuster, 1967). Danny Saunders and Reuven Malter become unlikely friends as they cross the neighborhood boundaries between Chassidic and non-Chassidic Jews in 1940s Brooklyn.

Potok, Chaim. ***Davita's Harp***. (Ballantine Books, 1985). As Ilana Davita Chandal grows up, she turns to Judaism for solace as world events of the 1930s and 1940s impact her life

Potok, Chaim. ***In the Beginning***. (Knopf, 1975) “The story of a boy who grows up in the Bronx through the twenties, the Depression, World War II and its aftermath, and is forced by these events into radically reassessing what it means for him to be a Jew.”

Potok, Chaim. ***The Gift of Asher Lev***. (Knopf, 1990). The story of the Ladover Hasid and artist continues, as his uncle's death brings him and his family back to Brooklyn from the South of France. Asher must wrestle with his ambitions as an artist and his family's needs for connection and community.

Potok, Chaim. ***My Name Is Asher Lev*** (Random House, 1972). A gifted artist from the Ladover Sect of Hasidism is torn between his gift for art and the traditions and constraints of his family and community.

Potok, Chaim. ***The Promise***. (Alfred A. Knopf, 1969). The story of Danny Saunders and Reuven Malter continues as both face challenges: Danny in his work with a mentally ill boy and Reuven as he pursues rabbinic ordination under the demands of a strict old-world teacher.

Ragen, Naomi, ***Jephthe's Daughter***. (Warner Books, 1988) Batsheva Ha-levi's father makes a match for his only child with a Talmud scholar, hoping to advance his family's Hasidic dynasty. But the worldly Batsheva is forced to escape from her insular community and her abusive husband.

Ragen, Naomi. ***The Sacrifice of Tamar***. (Crown, 1994) Tamar keeps a terrible secret rather than risk her marriage. When the secret is revealed, Tamar is forced to make serious decisions.

Ragen, Naomi. ***The Sisters Weiss***. (St. Martin's Press, 2013) “In 1950's Brooklyn, sisters Rose and Pearl Weiss grow up in a loving but strict ultra-Orthodox family. A chance meeting with a young French immigrant turns Rose's world upside down, and she begins to live a secret life that shocks her family when it is discovered. But the night before her arranged marriage, she commits an act of defiance so unforgivable it will exile her forever from her family. Forty years later, pious Pearl's sheltered young daughter Rivka discovers the truth about the family outcast, her Aunt Rose, now a successful photographer. She sets off on a dangerous adventure that will stir up the ghosts of the past and alter the future in unimaginable ways for all involved.”

Ragen, Naomi. **Sotah**. (Crown, 1992). Dina Reich Gutman obeys the strictures of her Orthodox community. But after a year of marriage, a child and her mother's death, her restlessness drives her into an inappropriate relationship. Forced into exile by the Morals Patrol, she must make her own decision about her life and her religion.

Reinhardt, Dana. **A Brief Chapter in My Impossible Life** (Wendy Lamb Books (Random House), 2006). Simone Turner knew she was adopted, but as a teenager, she learns that her biological mother, Rivka, who has terminal cancer, came from a Chassidic family and was cast out as a pregnant teenager. As her relationships develop with her mother and Zack (Simone's boyfriend), she learns more about Judaism, accepting people and situations for what they are, and having faith and hope without a religious context.

Reisner, Rosalind. **Jewish American Literature: A Guide to Reading Interests**. (Libraries Unlimited, 2004). Indispensable resource for Jewish librarians and others interested in the large and complex genre of Jewish reading.

Rubel, Nora L. **Doubting the Devout: The Ultra-Orthodox in the Jewish American Imagination**. (Columbia University Press, 2010). Rubel examines "selected literary and cinematic narratives featuring ultra-Orthodox characters written by non-haredi Jews" to explore "contemporary American Jewry and about what the haredim represent to mainstream American Jews."

Segal, Erich. **Acts of Faith**. (Bantam, 1992). Daniel and Deborah Luria do not meet their Hasidic father's rigid expectations, but they both find love and happiness on their own terms. Their "Shabbos goy," Timothy Hogan must also define his own life after dissatisfaction with the Catholic Church. Critics have labeled this both "a sweeping saga" and "predictable and heavy-handed."

Tanny, Binyamin. **Freiing Out: Why People Go Off the Derech & What We Can Do About It**. (Urim Publications, 2012). Based on the author's personal experience, he discusses the problems and his solutions for addressing this challenge.

Winston, Hella. **Unchosen: The Hidden Lives of Hasidic Rebels** (Beacon Press, 2005). The author's doctoral dissertation in sociology focuses on Hasidim who rebel against the restrictive and insular lifestyle in which they were brought up. Some have left the communities; other struggle between two worlds as they try to keep their outlets hidden from family and community.

Articles

Alderman, Naomi. "According to Your Will." *The Granta Blog*. 20 May 2011. <http://www.granta.com/New-Writing/According-to-Your-Will> accessed 7 July 2013.

Brown, Judy. "A Woman's Spirituality, Measured by Hosiery: Beige Stockings and Modesty in Hasidic Brooklyn." *The Forward*. 28 August 2012. <http://forward.com/articles/161646/a-womans-spirituality-measured-by-hosiery/> accessed 19 June 2013.

Brown, Judy. "Gentiles at the Gate: The Internet Changed Everything in the Hasidic World." *The Forward*. 25 October 2012. <http://forward.com/articles/164869/gentiles-at-the-gates/?p=all> accessed 19 June 2013.

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Brown, Judy. "The Loss: Grieving What Gets Left Behind." *The Forward*. 20 September 2012. <http://forward.com/articles/163064/the-loss/> accessed 19 June 2013.

Brown, Judy. "The Sun Is a Star." *The Forward*. 6 September 2012. <http://forward.com/articles/162232/the-sun-is-a-star/> accessed 19 June 2013.

Brown, Judy. "Ub-u-sive: Spelling Out Abuse After Nechemya Weberman's Conviction." *The Forward*. 20 December 2012. <http://forward.com/articles/168009/ub-u-sive/?p=all> accessed 19 June 2013.

Davis, Barry. "Losing Her Religion—and Finding Her Muse: Naomi Alderman on God, Therapy and Breaking Free." *Jerusalem Post Magazine*. 22 February 2013.

Kornbluth, Jesse. "Unorthodox: The Hasidic Campaign Against Deborah Feldman -- and Me." *Huffington Post*. 6 March 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jesse-kornbluth/unorthodox-the-hasidic-ca_b_1323675.html accessed 19 August 2013

Mor, Nataly. "Why I Went Off the Derech." *Frum Satire*. Accessed 29 September 2013. <http://www.frum satire.net/2010/05/10/why-i-went-off-the-derech/>

Ragen, Naomi. "Finding Orthodoxy." <http://www.naomiragen.com/israel/finding-orthodoxy/> accessed 2 September 2013.

Sichel, Ilana. "Lost Between Scripture and Self." *Los Angeles Review of Books*. 31 July 2012. <http://lareviewofbooks.org/article.php?id=801&fulltext=1> accessed 7 July 2013.

Websites

A Note from Eishes Chayil, author of Hush:

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/bloomsbury-teens/a-note-from-eishes-chayil-author-of-hush/146505998724682>

Confessions of a Koifer: the [Humble] Opinions of a Recovering Chassid:

<http://heathenhassid.blogspot.co.at/2013/06/spreading-word.html>

Da'as Hedyot: Definitely Not Da'as Torah: <http://daashedyot.blogspot.co.il/>

Exposing the Lies and Fabrications of Deborah Feldman:

<http://deborah-feldman-exposed.blogspot.co.il/>

FailedMessiah.com: Covering Orthodox Judaism Since 2004 -

<http://failedmessiah.typepad.com/>

Unpious: Voices on the Hasidic Fringe - <http://www.unpious.com/>