



Tradition in a Rootless World: Women Turn to Orthodox Judaism

By Lynn Davidman

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The past two decades in the United States have seen an immense liberalization and expansion of women's roles in society. Recently, however, some women have turned away from the myriad, complex choices presented by modern life and chosen instead a Jewish orthodox tradition that sets strict and rigid guidelines for women to follow.

Lynn Davidman followed the conversion to Orthodoxy of a group of young, secular Jewish women to gain insight into their motives. Living first with a Hasidic community in St. Paul, Minnesota, and then joining an Orthodox synagogue on the upper west side of Manhattan, Davidman pieced together a picture of disparate lives and personal dilemmas. As a participant observer in their religious resocialization and in interviews and conversations with over one hundred women, Davidman also sought a new perspective on the religious institutions that reach out to these women and usher them into the community of Orthodox Judaism.

Through vivid and detailed personal portraits, *Tradition in a Rootless World* explores women's place not only in religious institutions but in contemporary society as a whole. It is a perceptive contribution that unites the study of religion, sociology, and women's studies.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Davidman (sociology and women's studies, Univ. of Pittsburgh) offers an intriguing sociological exploration of the world of Orthodox Judaism and its resurgence among modern American women. The experiences of two distinctly different groups of single Jewish American women are traced as they return to their secular roots at a contemporary Orthodox synagogue (Lincoln Square) in New York City and a Lubovitch Hasidic community (Bais Chana) in St. Paul, Minnesota. Life experiences, individual reasons for returning, reflections on the meaning of Orthodoxy before and after conversion, and the roles of Orthodox Jewish women in modern American society are revealed, compared, and discussed throughout this study. This is an excellent introduction to an often misunderstood way of life. Highly recommended for synagogue libraries, public libraries, and Judaic studies collections.

- *Ann E. Cohen, Rochester P.L.*,

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Review

"A meticulously written and carefully researched study. . . . The book is objective, analytical, and insightful; it is also interestingly written with many fascinating examples and quotes. . . . An important point of departure for all future work on the subject."--William B. Helmreich, "The Jewish Press

From the Inside Flap

"[Davidman's] rich ethnographic observations and lucid prose illuminate two of the more important aspects of modern religion generally: the changing role of women and the resurgence of traditional faith."—Robert Wuthnow, author of *Meaning and Moral Order*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Louetta Cantrell:

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Martha Fincher:

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