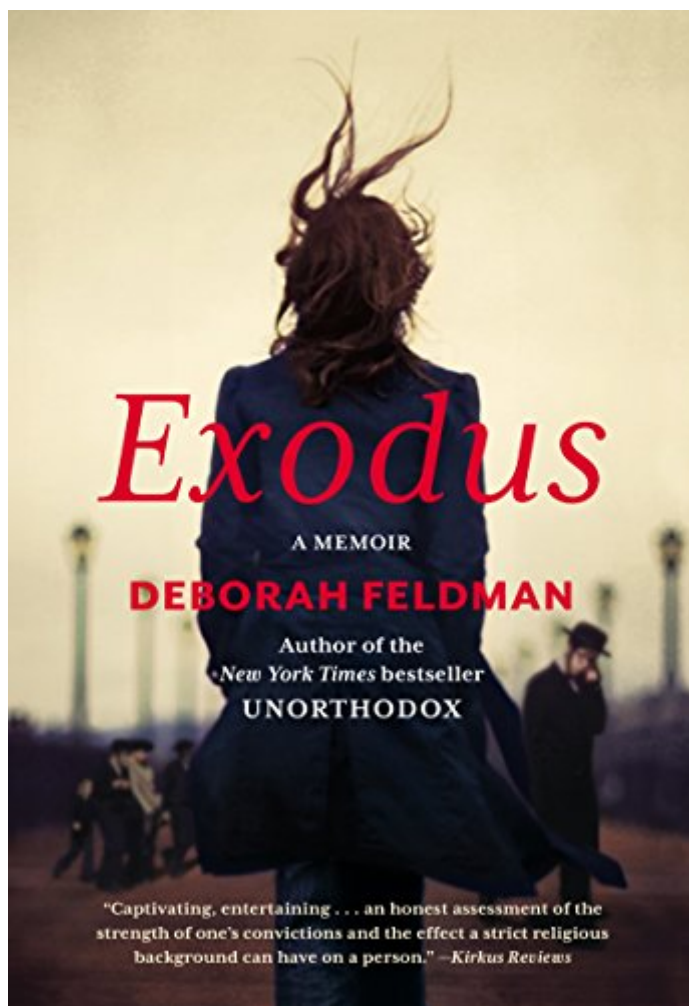


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Exodus: A Memoir



Synopsis

The author of the explosive New York Times-bestselling memoir *Unorthodox* chronicles her continuing journey as a single mother, an independent woman, and a religious refugee. In 2009, at the age of twenty-three, Deborah Feldman walked away from the rampant oppression, abuse, and isolation of her Satmar upbringing in Williamsburg, Brooklyn to forge a better life for herself and her young son. Since leaving, Feldman has navigated remarkable experiences: raising her son in the "real world," finding solace and solitude in a writing career, and searching for love. Culminating in an unforgettable trip across Europe to retrace her grandmother's life during the Holocaust, *Exodus* is a deeply moving exploration of the mysterious bonds that tie us to family and religion, the bonds we must sometimes break to find our true selves.

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Customer Reviews

I finished reading it as soon as I saw it on my Kindle. I had so enjoyed *Unorthodox* and was eagerly

waiting for the follow up. I have to say I was disappointed. I understand the search for self and identity in the new world she found herself living in. However, I was not all that interested in reading about her "unhappy vagina" and in the details of her affairs with men. I thought it put too much emphasis on her sexuality and less on other aspects of herself. Not to say that becoming a sexual being is important, it absolutely was, and clearly this is an area that she feels is very important to claiming herself. I would be more interested in learning about how she is co-parenting her son, given the rift between herself and her ex, and their lifestyle choices. I was also wondering how she was managing to go to all of these places and who was watching her kid!.

I had thoroughly enjoyed Deborah Feldman's book, *Unorthodox*, so when I heard that she had written a sequel, I couldn't wait to get it and read it. Unfortunately, unlike her first book, this one was a disappointment. While I do find her style of writing interesting and certain good break points in the chapters, and I enjoyed reading about her travels, there were several things that bothered me:1 - I found the storyline didn't flow -- it kept going back and forth through time, and it just wasn't coherent. It was a jumble of thoughts and journeys, all thrown into a bit with little separation, so one could easily get confused.2 - Where did she get this kind of money to spend so much time traveling? It's amazing all of the places she went to in such a short amount of time -- especially while she had Isaac. True, Isaac might have spent a fair amount of time with his father while Ms. Feldman was away, but we don't actually know how often Isaac actually sees his father; from the way she made it seem at the beginning, it didn't feel like Isaac was seeing him all of that much.3 - It was a bit redundant, pointing out many of the same things over and over again throughout the book.4 - In each chapter, I wasn't exactly sure why the chapter was called that. I did not feel that the stories and ideas she articulated corresponded with the title of each chapter. (And if it did correspond, I did not understand the connection between the content in the chapters as well as the actual chapter). Not only that, but with each chapter ending, I felt like that was a way to just end the story -- and then it just continued with something else, only to, mid-chapter, bring it back to a point from a previous chapter. Once the book ended, I just felt very confused -- where was the true closure, to close the book and feel like everything truly came together, at the end? I understand that finding oneself is a lifetime of work, and that it's never complete, but the end of the book just didn't seem to make sense; it felt like there was a previous part that would have been a better ending to the book, and that she just ran out of things to say.5 - I apologize if this offends some people, but I found it disturbing that while she throws away her Satmar upbringing, she instead goes to the opposite extreme -- of dating and sleeping with different men throughout her journey in Europe,

including a descendent of a Nazi! Even if he was a very nice person, and had true remorse for what the Nazis did, I just did not feel comfortable with it and I was not happy reading about it. There are ways to rebel against one's community without handling it the way she did.⁶ - I really would have liked to have seen more about how she decided to bring up her son, her relationship with her son as she left the Satmar community, as well as a bit of her relationship with her ex-husband, the father of her son -- and how her ex-husband handles the fact that she is no longer among those in the community. Is he still part of the community? How do they communicate with one another? How does her son communicate with his father? I would have found it just as interesting in her relationship with them as she discovers herself as she does on her journey through Europe and to her grandmother's old home. Even with all of my negatives, I actually did enjoy the book and found it interesting and in some ways, courageous. It was interesting to get glimpse of some of the type of people she met on her travels and it was a relatively easy read.

Hard to put down. I actually read all of Exodus with about 50 pages still to read in Unorthodox. I wanted to find out how her life evolved after leaving her Jewish community. With prose sometimes quick and light, sometimes ponderous and meditative, there is a not moment in her narratives (both of them) that I don't appreciate and revel in her courage, intelligence, and will to live fiercely, with passion, sometimes alone and always believing that anything and everything is possible. I finished both her memoirs wanting more and hoping that this young writer will continue to write and produce literature well into the her future.

I bought Exodus: A Memoir by the Author of Unorthodox| because I read Deborah Feldman's first book, Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots, which is a spectacular memoir of her life in the restrictive community of Satmar Chasidim in Brooklyn, and her courageous efforts to finally break free from this community and find her own place in the world. I gave that book five stars, I think, and I expected that Exodus would be a worthy sequel. It is not. Much of it rehashes Unorthodox. The style, unlike her first book, is stilted and downright boring: I couldn't and wouldn't finish it. The writing is not captivating, it is stilted, amateur, and dull. In Unorthodox, Ms. Feldman makes herself an interesting, three-dimensional person who I wanted to meet and get to know. In Exodus, she has become a terrified shadow of her former self who, while still struggling to fit in, whines about it rather than rises above it. The narrative is disjointed, skipping back and forth in time. While I generally find this literary technique captivating, here it doesn't work, because there is no timeline or connection between episodes. Ms. Feldman is a single mother, but she seems to spend

a great deal of time on trips to Europe to find her roots and elsewhere, leaving me wondering where is the child she loves so much while she is gallivanting around. The husband she described in her first book seemed a very distant man, one that I could not imagine leaving her son with for long periods of time. And, when she does find her grandmother's house, for example, why this is an important connection for her is not clear. She left a restrictive community, yet she seems hell-bent on making connections to it. Deborah Feldman is no longer interesting or captivating to me. She fails to capture her experiences in the "outside" world with the descriptive excellence of her restricted world. She is no longer interesting, and neither are any of the other people in this book. While I know that first books are often superior to subsequent ones, that generally applies to novels, not memoirs. I found nothing new in this sequel, and found myself wondering if she was desperate for money, and hoped she could ride on the wave of positive reviews for Unorthodox, and got very lazy in her writing. I think that is what bothered me the most: this could have been an interesting sequel - I wanted to know what happened to her when I finished Unorthodox. Exodus disappoints. I expected a lot more from this writer.

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