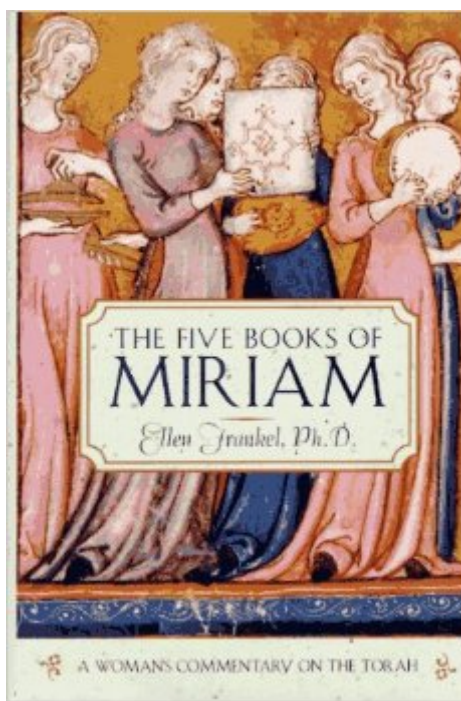


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# The Five Books Of Miriam



## Synopsis

Paralleling the Torah's traditional division, each section of a new biblical commentary is divided into a summary of the weekly reading and includes a response written from the female perspective and told through the voices of biblical women.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (23 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #797,575 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #106 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Women & Judaism](#) #699 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Sacred Writings > Hebrew Bible \(Old Testament\)](#) #6549 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Criticism & Theory](#)

## Customer Reviews

This is a creative approach to analyzing the Torah with a unique concern for the ways the texts speak to the experiences of women. Frankel, Ph.D., has concocted a playlist of biblical characters (and a few extra-biblical characters) who then essentially read the Torah together and discuss it. The conversation rolls along dialogically, with various characters proposing various interpretations and discussing the text. It is a wide departure from most exegetical books which attempt to "tell" the reader what the text says. Frankel invites the reader to be a participant in the interpretation, siding with or disagreeing with the various participants. The strongest advantage of the book is not the empowerment of women but the empowerment of students of the Bible. As a woman's commentary, it is interesting though perhaps a bit obvious. They protest the things you expect the caricatured feminist reader to protest. Their internal disagreements are not so widely divergent as modern feminist writers'. There is, to my mind, no particularly new or creative contributions to the women's movement or egalitarianism. On the other hand, there is nothing here to find particularly offensive, either. Cryptic is the hermeneutic that Frankel, Ph.D. uses. Somehow "Lillith the Rebel," an apparent alternative to Eve, is given a voice equivalent to Miriam's. From where she chooses her

authorities (or dialogue partners) is vague. There are both more and less extreme voices she could have chosen. Similarly, God is called, among other things, "Ha-Rahaman, the Womb-of-the-World" (p. 59), an uncited neologism. I presume this is just Frankel's attempt to be creative, although it feels awkward when she's through.

Ellen Frankel, PhD, has penned a masterpiece, creating/inventing voices for many of the voiceless women of the Torah. In the process Dr. Frankel has provided much of the white fire upon which the black fire letters of the Torah are written. I must admit, however, that reading this book made me quite angry at times (not at Dr. Frankel; at the way that women have been treated both in Biblical times and in Orthodox Judaism throughout Jewish history), and I had to read it very slowly -- one small section at a time -- in order not to become enervated. If there is one weakness of *The Five Books Of Miriam* it's that Dr. Frankel did not go far enough in her criticism of all the feminiphobia -- then and now -- especially after having raised so many legitimate issues that have plagued traditional Judaism's treatment of women since its inception. So.....to fill in the gap...Smilin' Sam The Hybrid (female soul/male body) says: In the beginning, G-d The Bored Mad Scientist Genetic Manipulator...erred. The Rabbis EXCLAIM: HERESY! Lilith The Rebel interjects: Ya got MY vote. Continue. Smilin' Sam The Hybrid continues: Lilith and Adam were created EQUALLY. Not identically, obviously, but equally. Lilith acted within her proscribed nature. Adam overstepped HIS proscribed nature. Yet G-d The Sometimes Random One ("I shall show kindness to whom I care to show kindness") sided with Adam, while abandoning his precious daughter Lilith. And the world has been broken ever since. Lilith The Rebel asks: Where were YOU at the beginning?!!! Smilin' Sam The Hybrid quips: Here, at the end. Lilith The Rebel fires back: Watch it, sonny boy. I like you, but I am not one to be messed with.

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