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In this volume, Rabow mines many of the resources of traditional midrashic and rabbinic commentaries on biblical Leah. His bibliography includes some standard works such as *Midrash Rabbah* (citing the Jacob Neusner translations), *Midrash Tanhumah, Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu*, commentaries by Ramban (Nachmanides), Rashi, and Sforno, as well as the Talmud. He also features a combined volume citing Rabbeinu Chananel, Rabbi Shm’uel ben Meir (Rash’bam), Rabbi David Kimhi (R’dak), and Rabbi Ovadia Seforno. In addition, Rabow draws upon many contemporary scholar/translators/commentators such as Robert Alter, Everett Fox, Richard Eliot Friedman, Nehama Leibowitz, Stephen Mitchell, Nahum Sarna, Avivah Gottlieb Zornbeg and naturally Hertz’s *Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, the Reform movement’s W. Gunther Plaut’s *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (but amazingly not the revised 2005/2006 superb revised edition by David E. S. Stein), the Conservative movement’s *Etz Hayim Torah and Commentary*, edited by David Lieber, and Tamar Cohn Eskenazi and Andrea L. Weiss’s *The Torah: A Women’s Commentary*. Naturally, he also cites among many other works, Louis Ginzberg’s *Legends of the Jews*. In addition to midrashic/aggadic works, he also refers to the Pseudepigrapha’s Book of Jubilees. Virtually every major, and many minor Jewish commentators are listed, although he does not refer to E. A. Speiser’s book on Genesis in the Anchor Bible series. There is no doubt that he has been wide reaching in his sources.

Leah’s story is told over several chapters in Genesis, primarily Genesis 29-35. Rabow divides his life of Leah into, appropriately enough, seven sections: Waiting for Leah, What Really Happened on Leah’s Wedding Night, Leah Begins Married Life in Conflict, Leah Continues the Conflict,
Leah and the Family Leave Haran, Leah Comes to the Promised Land, and The Deaths of Rachel, Leah, and Jacob. To his credit, Rabow presents a great deal of material for the interested reader. He begins by relating the narrative of Leah. In this section, he offers the reader the method he plans to employ. Rabow writes of “our first exercise as literary detectives attempting to uncover the hidden story of Leah” (14). It is this kind of folksy, omniscient author, “let’s explore together” that he uses throughout the book. One wonders if it is not a bit overdone. Rabow very consciously approaches his material from the present looking into the past. He writes about the difficulty of “those of us living in modern society” viewing ancient cultures and that matters may not be immediately apparent to us. While this point is well taken, he makes value judgments about life in the ancient world, referring to “social control in primitive Haran” (53, my emphasis). He also indulges in popular psychology, analyzing the inner emotions of the biblical characters. In considering the first wedding night (Gen. 29:23-25) when Laban substitutes Leah for Rachel, Rabow intermixes midrashic interpretation with the biblical text, and then makes pronouncements about Leah’s feelings. According to some midrashic interpretations, Rachel positioned herself under the wedding bed. She responded to Jacob’s words on that fateful night to save face for Leah. Rabow then writes that “surely Leah also suffers deeply from this bizarre plan that, while allowing consummation of her marriage, [it] requires her sister to be there, only inches away . . . can Leah ever lie in bed again with her husband, Jacob, without feeling that Rachel is there, too?” (56).

Rabow clearly admires Leah. He writes of her as “a great Matriarch” who makes “speedy judgments and takes[s] prompt actions to deal with her awkward situation . . . [a woman who has a] noble character [who lives] . . . a life of moral heroism” (98). Later on in the book he refers to “Avivah Zornberg’s splendid analysis of the Leah-Jacob-Rachel triangle, [and that] this love story is actually a love tragedy. Each sister fails to derive sufficient gratification from what she has in the relationship, and each instead yearns for what her rival
has” (179). Although he does not refer to their work, Danna Nolan Fewell and David Gunn explored this matter in an earlier book *Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story* (1993) where they wrote: “The problem for Rachel and Leah is indeed one of unwholeness. Neither is allowed to be whole persons. From the beginning they were introduced to us only as parts, as though neither were complete in herself (29:16-17) . . . each woman possesses something the other does not . . . Rachel is the wife, the lover, the one desired by her husband. Leah is the mother, the ‘other,’ and fertile to a fault, it seems. They each want to be the other. Rachel may have her husband’s love but what she really wants is children . . . Leah, on the other hand, has plenty of children, sons . . . [but what] Leah wants, however, is her husband’s love . . . She, like Rachel, is caught in a vain attempt to change her life.”

The book can be appreciated just for the way that Rabow presents his material. Since he cites so many sources, however, if one wishes, the interested reader could refer to these commentaries and reach an even deeper level of understanding. The book contains a Glossary of names and definitions. There is an extensive bibliography and an index as well. JPS deserves praise for small additions such as listing, in the endnotes section in the footer the page numbers in the book itself where those particular citations are found, as well as listing the chapter names in the footnotes section. These items are very helpful to the reader.