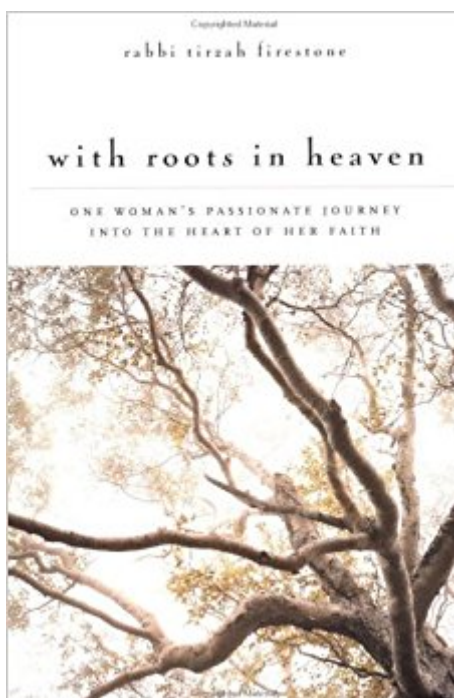


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# With Roots In Heaven: One Woman's Passionate Journey Into The Heart Of Her Faith



## Synopsis

"Candid, intense, and compulsively readable, this is spiritual biography at its very best."--Letty Cottin Pogrebin

At age seventeen, Tirzah Firestone left the oppressive home of her Orthodox Jewish parents and set off on a spiritual odyssey. *With Roots in Heaven* is the story of that journey, a fascinating and moving account of her evolution from rebellious young seeker to renegade rabbi. This is an inspiring, true account of a courageous woman with strong convictions and a passion to know and feel God. It is also a book that goes beyond one person's story of wandering and redemption to explore the dangers of modern religion and the joys and conflicts of intermarriage and raising interfaith children. An unforgettable story of love, sacrifice, and transformation--of grace sought and found--*With Roots in Heaven* offers hope, wisdom, and encouragement to anyone seeking deeper spiritual meaning in today's world. "A daring exploration of different spiritual paths . . . filled with joy, story, community, and a celebration of ancient wisdom."--Joan Borysenko, Ph.D., author of *Minding the Body*, *Mending the Mind* and *A Woman's Book of Life*

## Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Plume (November 1, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0452278856

ISBN-13: 978-0452278851

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.9 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 15 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #546,012 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #83 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Judaism > Women & Judaism](#) #1802 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Ethnic Studies](#) #3361 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Religious](#)

## Customer Reviews

Firestone's autobiography has all the suspense and excitement of a good novel as it details her complex journey from a meticulously observant Orthodox Jewish background to her current faith. She takes readers from the static faith she experienced growing up through the geography of her spiritual search in many religious traditions to her marriage to a Christian minister and rejection of her birth family (with whom she later reconciled) and then to her rediscovery of her Jewish roots in a

renewed form. Her story is a wonderful example of the transformation of what was, to the author, almost a dead faith into one that is vital and transformational yet accepting of Jews who define their faith more narrowly. Recommended reading for spiritual seekers and feminists in various religious traditions. Dr. Carolyn M. Craft, Longwood Coll., Farmville, VA Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Tirzah Firestone is a psychotherapist and founding rabbi of the Jewish Renewal community of Boulder, Colorado. Rabbi Firestone teaches and lectures widely on Jewish meditation and practices. She lives in Boulder with her husband, David, and their three children.

Very moving personal story of spiritual growth and challenge. Also Jewishly educational.

Tirzah Firestone really knows how to write. Her prose is compelling, her stories vivid, and the people she describes all seem to leap off the page. My first reaction to this book was "Wow! What a deep and meaningful book." Then I went away and reflected a bit. This book is all about Tirzah, which is what you would expect from a memoir. The problem is that she extrapolates from her experience to make sweeping generalizations about other people's experience. Her spiritual journey was crooked and laboured -- it took her a long time to figure out where she wanted to go and start down the path that would lead her there. She holds this up as a banner, implying that people whose journeys were shorter, or easier, or straighter have less authenticity than she does. I find that the book works well as an honest description of one person's path to deeper spirituality. I am disappointed that even though she sees others very clearly, she has such a limited view of herself. It's as if she cannot see what she reveals about herself in her prose. This book is the story of a flawed person trying to get closer to G-d. It should be inspirational for the rest of us flawed people trying to do the same. But she thinks she's special, so she offers only a story to read, to watch, not a guidebook or an invitation.

I could really relate to this book in many ways. I was raised in a very traditional Jewish household, left that branch of Judaism, explored the New Age, and also still practice Judaism (I never really left it). I really love and admire this book. Firestone shows in sad detail what often happens when a child from a very religious background decides to head off in another direction - the parents, relatives, and community shun him or her. As I read along in the book, and I saw Firestone falling in love with her husband-to-be (a Protestant minister) I literally heard tense drumbeats in my head, as I knew

her parents would cut her off from their lives. I also really appreciated the author showing her reaction, how distraught she was at her own wedding because her parents were so opposed to it, and her deep grief at her mother's refusal to even acknowledge her existence. Unfortunately, I have seen this "shunning" in the Orthodox community, as well as in other religious communities. This book also aptly explores the spiritual search a great number of Jews undertake - that is to what is commonly called "The New Age". Many Jews leave Judaism for good, but Firestone showed how she returned, and how she had to do it her way, in the Jewish renewal movement. This is a book that is courageous, honest, and very well-written. Anyone remotely interested in spiritual searching would love this book.

A lot of books come by my desk each season, and I approached this book lacking any great interest. But after the first few pages I was actually addicted. If an autobiography can be called suspenseful, this one is. This book scores as both a primer in spirituality and the story of a woman who flees her Orthodox upbringing in Saint Louis, studies New Age and eastern religions, marries a Christian minister, but then returns to her roots to study for the rabbinate. Rabbi Firestone, a colleague of Rabbi Zalman Schecter-Shalomi, is now a leader in the Jewish Renewal movement, and serves the Jewish communities of Boulder Colorado and the Intermountain area. I will try not to ruin the suspense of the book's story, but suffice it to say the following: The book opens when Rabbi Firestone, born Miriam Firestone in Saint Louis, walks into a Miami hotel for the wedding of her niece. Her brothers, sisters, and mother will be there; some of whom she has not seen in decades, some of whom view her as dead! We must wait for the epilogue to discover what happens at the hotel. Between this intro and the epilogue, we follow Tirzah and her family and friends as she yearns for and seeks out spiritual connections, and desires to learn her bashert in life. She must realize the true path of her heart and discover the inverted tree that descends from the heavens. Along the way we learn why New Age and Eastern religions have been so enticing to Jewish youth, we meet Jew-Bhu's, Hin-Jews, and gurus. The late Rabbi Shlomo Carlbach, a cousin to Tirzah, even makes an appearance in the book, as do beautiful people and seekers of all religions, as well as rogue and manipulative gurus and rabbis. Regretably, her honest portraits of some of the Orthodox leaders she meets along the way brings shame upon some in our community. It took a troubled Christian minister to help Tirzah realize that what she sought could be found in her birth religion of Judaism and in the writings of Heschel, Buber, and the Lurianic Kabbalists. I think readers will try to read faster only to find out in each succeeding chapter what will happen to Tirzah. How will she react to her family's belief that her older brother's suicide was due to a faulty

mezuzah? Like Jonah, will she survive a sailing ordeal on the Pacific with a racist rabbi? Will her marriage kill her parents? Will she learn to trust her own heart and break her need to follow strong male spiritual leaders? Can she overcome her personal issues and fear of reconnecting with organized religion? Who is that Yiddish jokester inner voice that saves her in many instances? Surely, this book should be a contender for the Jewish Book Award. This book may actually change some of leader's opinions on officiating at intermarriages in the future.

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