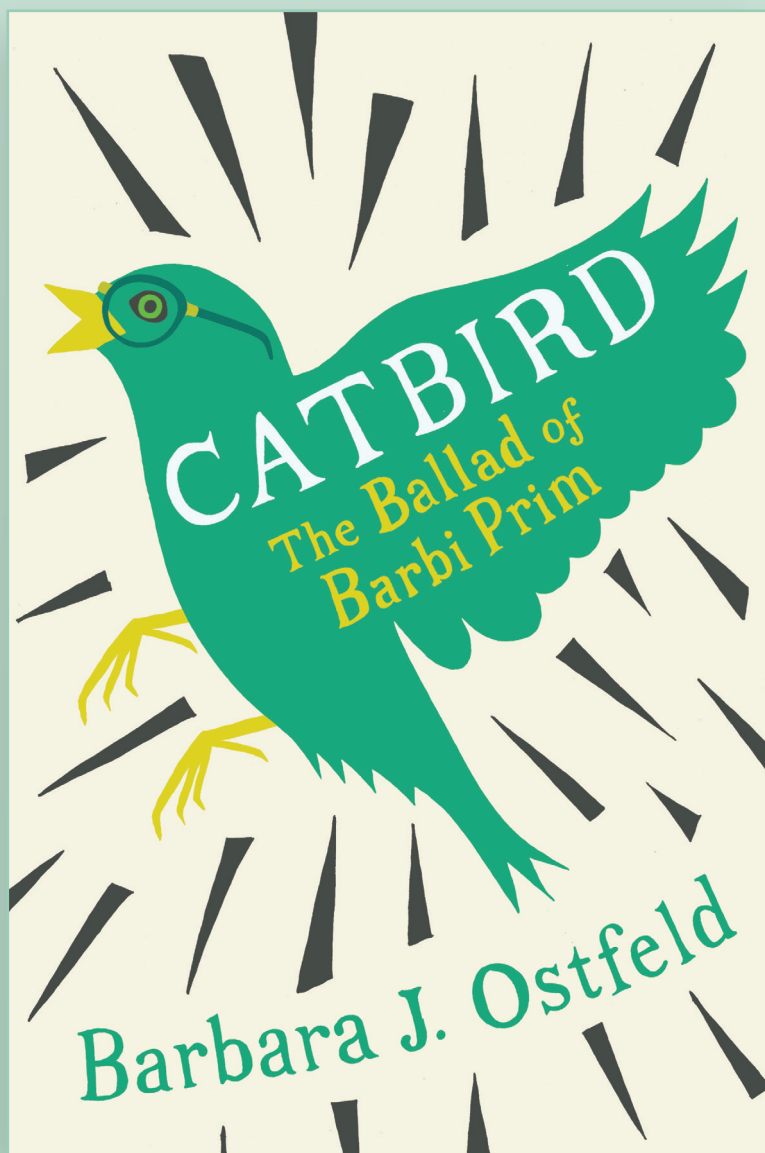


A Reading Guide for Women Clergy Groups

CATBIRD *The Ballad of Barbi Prim*



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catbirdbook.com

CATBIRD *The Ballad of Barbi Prim*

Questions

1. In what ways do Barbara's childhood experiences lead her to the clergy? Do you identify with her feelings?
2. How did maternal or paternal figures affect your decision to choose a religious profession?
3. Do you find yourself seeking professional approval more often than you'd like?
4. Do you feel you need to dress in a certain way? Or feel like you spend too much time thinking about how people will react to your hair or makeup?
5. Does your personal body image affect your work?
6. What do you think—or hope—will change with the next generation of women clergy?
7. How does *Catbird* demonstrate that women's voices transform the holy narrative?
8. Barbara describes her successful method for avoiding being kissed in greeting lines. What is your experience in these situations?
9. Rabbi Naamah Kelman Ezrachi coined the phrase "text testosterone." In her experience, women clergy are expected to focus on the emotional side of religion, and to leave the intellectual "heavy lifting"—working with text and theory and philosophy—to men. How does *Catbird* address "text testosterone"? What are your thoughts?
10. *Catbird* reinforces the reality that women clergy—clergy with diverse identities in general (for example, women of color, members of the LGBTQ community, adoptive parents and children)—help more people feel comfortable in their congregations. How does your own experience demonstrate this?
11. When Barbara frantically pursues fertility treatment, how is her work affected? What are your thoughts about trying to achieve pregnancy while wearing a collar? About being pregnant? Or importantly about not wanting to be a mother?

Thoughts



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12. If you have children, do you think your status as a mother is affected by your professional role? If you don't have children, do you think your status as a "childless" woman is affected by your professional role?
13. If you have children, do you think your status as clergy is affected by being a mother? If you don't have children, do you think your status as clergy is affected by being "childless"?
14. When her children are growing up, Barbara expects them to adapt to living in a fish bowl. Do women clergy grapple differently with child-rearing issues today? If so, how?
15. Since Barbara's time in the synagogue, have circumstances improved for LGBTQ women in the pulpit?
16. Have you ever been mistaken for a clergy wife or a clergy assistant? Is that happening less as time goes by?
17. In *Catbird*, Barbara worries about her congregational friendships. Female rabbis of her time did too. Do women in the pulpit today still deal with constraints (perceived or real) on their social lives?
18. How does *Catbird* treat the subject of the identity of retired women clergy?
19. What do you look forward to in retirement, or enjoy now that you are retired?
20. What are the parallels between your triumphs and Barbara's?
21. Are women more comfortable in clergy roles today than when you were first ordained?

Thoughts

