



# Washing the Dead

By Michelle Brafman

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“Intimate, big-hearted, compassionate and clear-eyed, Brafman’s novel turns secrets into truths and the truth into the heart of fiction.” —**AMY BLOOM**, author of *Lucky Us* and *Away*

“From roots in one religious tradition, comes a tale of emotional redemption for all of us. Michelle Brafman’s astonishing compassion for all human frailty infuses this story about the need for truth and the promise of forgiveness.” —**HELEN SIMONSON**, author of *Major Pettigrew’s Last Stand*

“Heartfelt and genuine, *Washing the Dead* never betrays the complicated truths of family and tradition.” —**DAVID BEZMOZGIS**, author of *Natasha and Other Stories* and *The Betrayers*

“Like a Jewish Anne Lamott, Brafman reels you in with warmth, depth and heart.” —**SUSAN COLL**, author of *The Stager* and *Acceptance*

Three generations of women confront family secrets in this exquisitely wrought debut novel that examines the experience of religious community, the perilous emotional path to adulthood, and the power of sacred rituals to repair damaged bonds between mothers and daughters.

**Michelle Brafman**’s award-winning short stories and essays have appeared in the *Washington Post*, *Slate*, *Tablet*, *Lilith Magazine*, *Bethesda Magazine* and elsewhere. She teaches fiction writing at the Johns Hopkins University MA in Writing Program and lives in Glen Echo, Maryland with her husband and two children.

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## Washing the Dead By Michelle Brafman Bibliography

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- 344 pages

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## Editorial Review

Review

**Jewish Book Council “Spring 2015 Jewish Book Preview” featured title**

“A fast-paced and compelling debut.” — *LIBRARY JOURNAL*

"A heartfelt story of loss, hope, and reconciliation." — *BOOKLIST*

“Brafman’s tale of three generations of women shows that woundedness—damage to mind and soul—can travel down the generations, and that so can kindness, courage and, ultimately, self-healing. . . . [Washing the Dead] succeeds in showing how family history has a way of sneaking up on us from the depths of the past, shaping the present in ways both familiar and unexpected.” —*Haaretz*

" . . . (a) beautifully wrought novel, one in which Brafman examines the inner lives of her characters with the dexterity of a surgeon and the compassion of a saint.” —*LILITH MAGAZINE*

"Striking debut novel . . . poignant." —*THE JEWISH NEWS WEEKLY*

“Compelling.” —*THE NEW YORK JEWISH WEEK*

**A *Washingtonian* magazine "Book Washingtonians Should Be Reading"**

“Preparing the dead for traditional Jewish burial is considered the holiest and most sacred mitzvah that a Jew may perform because there is no way for the dead to repay the act of goodness. . . . In performing this mitzvah [in *Washing the Dead*], the protagonist cleanses herself of hatreds and misunderstandings that she has been carrying around since her youth.”

—*Jewish Book Council*

“Deeply moving. . . . We are eased into an Orthodox Jewish community and a family burdened by secrets as gently as if an old friend were guiding us every step of the way. . . . *Washing the Dead* is a profoundly hopeful book. I can think of few others that honor ordinary women as simply and as clearly as this one does. Read it to feel how much is possible in the world all around us.”

—*Best New Fiction*

“Brafman . . . puts her mother-and-daughter characters through the fire. Yet on the other side, each comes out refined, understanding that the legacy of one’s family requires understanding and true forgiveness, which may be the greatest mitzvah of all.”

—*New Pages*

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“Sensual and spiritual, shot with betrayals, *Washing the Dead* plumbs the destructive power of secrets across three generations of mothers and daughters. In haunting prose, Brafman offers a riveting glimpse into Orthodox and Chasidic life, and breathtaking insight into what it means to forgive.” —**DYLAN LANDIS**, author of *Rainey Royal* and *Normal People Don’t Live Like This*

“A rich tale of love, friendship, yearning, and forgiveness. Brafman’s beautifully wrought prose quickly cuts to the heart of things: how to live, how to love, and how to care for the dead.” —**JESSICA ANYA BLAU**, author of *The Summer of Naked Swim Parties* and *The Wonder Bread Summer*

“Like a Jewish Anne Lamott, Brafman reels you in with warmth, depth and heart. Infused with lush detail about Orthodox Jewish life in the Midwest... Brafman has written a charming and original spiritual page-turner about love, forgiveness, and family life.” —**SUSAN COLL**, author of *The Stager* and *Acceptance*

“Throughout these pages, moving in shadow, runs the terrific responsibility of forgiveness and redemption. . . . Michelle Brafman has done us all a true mitzvah by writing this beautiful book.” —**ROBERT BAUSCH**, author of *Far as the Eye Can See* and *A Hole in the Earth*

“What a spectacular debut.” —**T. GREENWOOD**, author of *The Forever Bridge* and *Bodies of Water*

“Brafman offers a fresh, vital narrative about guilt, love, loss, and the necessity of wrestling with the dark angel of a painful family legacy until it blesses you. June Pupnick, one of the most bewitching and problematic fictional mothers I’ve come across in years, makes a regular habit of escaping her life by ‘gobbling up’ novels ‘without chewing.’ Please resist gobbling this novel. Slow down, savor the richness and generosity of Brafman’s storytelling, and then buy a copy for your most deserving friend.” —**MARGARET MEYERS**, author of *Dislocation* and *Swimming in the Congo*

“With the knife blade of her prose honed razor sharp, Brafman skillfully dissects the bonds of mother-daughter relationships.... She weaves together the sacred and the profane, reverberating silences, exile and return, atonement and forgiveness with the tenderness of a mother braiding the hair of a beloved daughter.” —**FAYE MOSKOWITZ**, author of *Her Face in the Mirror* and *A Leak in the Heart*

“An illuminating and intricately layered novel about the complicated legacies that pass from mother to daughter, and about the ways that understanding our own history helps make us who we are. Brafman is an insightful writer who never falters or flinches in her quest to uncover the hearts of her characters.” —**CAROLYN PARKHURST**, author of *The Nobodies Album* and *The Dogs of Babel*

“A riveting and humane account of family pain passed from one generation to the next.... How do we begin to forgive those who injured us? Start by reading Brafman’s unflinching and inspiring novel.” —**MARY KAY ZURAVLEFF**, author of *Man Alive!*, *The Bowl Is Already Broken*, and *The Frequency of Souls*

About the Author

**Michelle Brafman** grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and now lives in Glen Echo, Maryland with her husband and two children. She is a graduate of the University of California, San Diego and Johns Hopkins

University, where she now teaches fiction writing. Her award-winning short stories and essays have appeared in the *Washington Post*, *Slate*, *Tablet*, *Lilith Magazine*, *Bethesda Magazine*, *Superstition Review*, *Potomac Review*, *minnesota review*, *Fifth Wednesday Journal*, *Gargoyle* and elsewhere. A regular contributor to the *Lilith Magazine* blog, she has led its salon discussions at theaters and arts centers throughout the Washington, DC area. Brafman is also a former documentary filmmaker whose film *American Lives: Jewish Stories*, like her debut novel *Washing the Dead*, illuminates seldom told stories of the Jewish experience.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Dennis Bloom:**

The knowledge that you get from *Washing the Dead* will be the more deep you rooting the information that hide inside the words the more you get serious about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to understand but *Washing the Dead* giving you buzz feeling of reading. The article writer conveys their point in specific way that can be understood by means of anyone who read the item because the author of this reserve is well-known enough. That book also makes your personal vocabulary increase well. Therefore it is easy to understand then can go together with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having this particular *Washing the Dead* instantly.

#### **Chris Holmes:**

Is it you who having spare time after that spend it whole day by watching television programs or just lying down on the bed? Do you need something new? This *Washing the Dead* can be the respond to, oh how comes? The new book you know. You are therefore out of date, spending your time by reading in this fresh era is common not a nerd activity. So what these books have than the others?

#### **Gordon Lipsky:**

On this era which is the greater man or woman or who has ability to do something more are more treasured than other. Do you want to become among it? It is just simple strategy to have that. What you need to do is just spending your time little but quite enough to possess a look at some books. One of several books in the top collection in your reading list is actually *Washing the Dead*. This book and that is qualified as *The Hungry Inclines* can get you closer in turning into precious person. By looking upward and review this e-book you can get many advantages.

#### **Peter Beaton:**

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