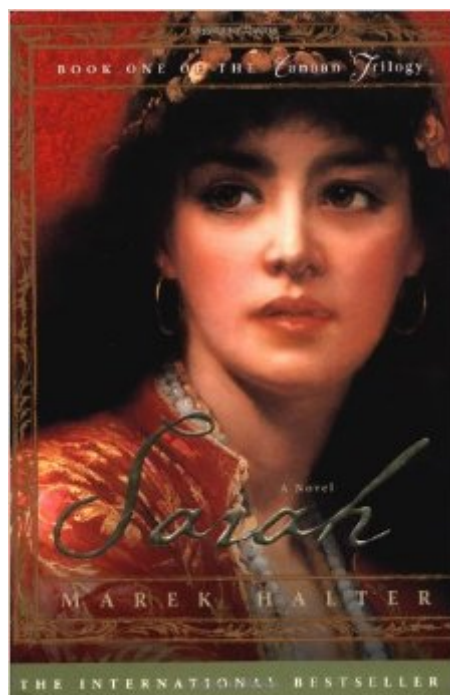


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Sarah: A Novel (The Canaan Trilogy, Book 1)



Synopsis

The first novel in a dazzling new trilogy about the women of the Old Testament by internationally bestselling author Marek Halter. The story of Sarah--and of history itself--begins in the cradle of civilization: the Sumerian city-state of Ur, a land of desert heat, towering gardens, and immense wealth. The daughter of a powerful lord, Sarah is raised in great luxury, but balks at the arranged marriage her father has planned for her. The groom is handsome and a nobleman, but on their wedding day, Sarah panics and impulsively flees to the vast, empty marshes outside the city walls. There she meets a young man, Abram, a member of a nomadic tribe of outsiders. Drawn to this exotic stranger, Sarah spends the night with him, but reluctantly returns to her father's house. But on her return, still desperate to avoid another wedding, she drinks a poisonous potion that will make her barren and thus unfit for marriage. Many years later, Abram's people return to Ur, and he discovers that the lost, rebellious girl from the marsh has been transformed into the most splendid and revered woman in Sumeria--the high priestess of the goddess Ishtar. But the memory of their night together has always haunted Sarah, and she gives up her exalted life to join Abram's tribe and follow the one true God, an invisible deity who speaks only to Abram. It is then that her journey truly begins--a journey that holds the key to her remarkable destiny as the mother of nations. From the great ziggurat of Ishtar and the fertile valleys of Canaan to the bedchamber of the mighty Pharaoh himself, Sarah's story reveals an ancient world full of beauty, intrigue, and miracles.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I really enjoyed this novel--it's not only entertaining as an afternoon read, it gives the reader a lot to think about without ever being didactic. Ignore the reviewers who argue over whether Sarah was Abraham's sister (they had a child together, so I'm guessing that unless the Bible sanctions incest, they were not. And honestly people, did you even bother to READ the book?) This is a very well-written book that takes a look at the life and times of an influential woman, without ever losing sight of her essential humanity and the beauty of her spirit. Sarah's constant wrangling with God's will and with whether or not to believe in an invisible God speaks a great deal to what all of us deal with in our own lives, even if we don't go to church or synagogue regularly. It's also a terrific love story between a very intelligent, mystical, headstrong man, Abraham, and his bold, intelligent, practical wife, Sarah. I am glad to see a book that celebrates the love a man can have for a woman who is not only beautiful, but who challenges his worldviews and acts as a total partner with him in his journey to find God. I highly recommend this book to anyone who likes a good novel, especially a historical one.

I so much enjoyed "Sarah" that I read it in twenty-four hours. The day before I read the "Red Tent". If you are searching for a historically accurate portrayal of the story of Sarah and Abraham you won't find it here. What you will find is an entertaining historical novel focusing on the women in biblical times. The male author does a really good job (contrary to one reviewer's opinion) of writing in a female voice. I felt he understood the trials and tribulations of women at that time very well. This book is about Sarah so to say it would have been better if it had been written about another character is ludicrous. The ongoing debate between reviewers about the relationship between Sarah and Abraham is also ludicrous given that there is no way to know exactly if they were related or not. The Bible is filled with historical inaccuracies and exaggerations as it was written by men who had an agenda of their very own to protect. The point I'm trying to make here is that this is a fictionalized version of the story of Sarah and Abraham. It is enjoyable, fast paced and gives an overview of life at that time. If you are looking for biblical truths you won't find it here and no amount of arguing will change that.

There are so many "stories from the Bible" novels out there right now, and I have read most of them, but Sarah really stands out from the crowd, and while it's based in the Biblical story, it never

hits you over the head with religious dogma. Sarah is really the story of the journey of Sarai from a pampered daughter of a rich lord to the wife of the nomadic prophet Abraham of the book of Genesis. She's known for her beauty, but is remarkably gutsy and intelligent, and acts as a full partner to the charismatic and determined Abraham. There's a wonderful love story to be found in these pages, the love of two bold and adventurous people who risk everything for each other and for what they believe in. The descriptions in this book are marvellous, from the opening pages in the great Babylonian city of Ur to the palaces of the Pharaoh and the wide open fields of Canaan. The author has a talent for bringing places and people to life without loading down his work with lots of adjectives and flights of fancy--all the images are vivid and real, and it makes for a great "curl up and enjoy" kind of read.

Marek Halter's SARAH is already a bestseller in France and has been translated into ten languages. The debut of SARAH in the United States will lend credence to Halter's sensitive treatment of women in the Bible. His plans for the two subsequent books in the trilogy are the stories of Zipporah and Lilah, lesser known than Sarah, wife of Abraham, but with tremendous impact on the shaping of society. SARAH is the story of civilization's first rebellious teenager who became one of the world's most powerful women. An interview with the author reveals that he sees his women as those "beside," not "behind" great men. The book emphasizes Sarah's working side by side with Abraham to create a life filled with his religious beliefs. Sarah was not a believer in Abraham's God until late, after her early mistakes came back to haunt her unfulfilled life. SARAH begins in the region now known as Iraq, the cradle of history, between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. The region was then known as Sumeria and the city-state where Sarai lived was known as Ur. She is the daughter of a powerful lord of Ur, a beautiful child who comes to womanhood in the first chapter. Her father arranges a marriage with a suitable man when she is twelve years old. The young girl is terrified of the prospects of the marriage bed and flees. Overnight, she runs from safety in the walled city to unknown terrors beyond it. On a riverbank she meets Abram, a poor but exotic member of a nomadic tribe. She spends the night with him and longs for his kiss. But soldiers discover her in the morning and return her to her father's house. Halter has a unique way of entering his heroine's mindset and allowing the reader to see and feel the turmoil swimming in her head. Sarai's beauty is the quality that sets her apart from other women and allows her to once again return to family's favor. But her fate rests solely with her father. He again arranges a marriage, not as opulent with preparation as the first. Sarai is terrified. She cannot erase the memory of her night with the young nomad, Abram. Terrified, she sneaks away, buys a powerful potion from a witch and drinks it. She

has made herself barren, unfit to wed. She becomes the powerful priestess of the god, Ishtar, idolized by residents of the entire city. During this period she meets Abram for the second time and follows her heart to remain with him. The Bible has inspired Halter with stories of its feminine heroines. He feels that women were at times the true founders of world history. He takes liberty with Sarai's life, introducing stories about her that cannot be documented. But the sensual, exotic role she plays in Abram's story is one of both support and leadership. Aloof at times, her beauty both enhances and betrays her power in her newfound home. She has qualities that all humankind possesses: tenderness, love, jealousy, self-loathing, self-servitude, kindness and leadership. Sarai becomes Sarah, in final recognition of her husband's one God. SARAH is the story of a modern woman, one who learns and profits from her mistakes. From her experiences, she is able to lend strength to the others in her care. This is a story of desire, intense emotion and consequences of sins committed to justify those feelings. I look forward to reading the second and third books in the Canaan Trilogy. Halter's message is one of hope for future generations through reflections upon a rich past. --- Reviewed by Judy Gigstad

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