



The Harlot by the Side of the Road: Forbidden Tales of the Bible

By Jonathan Kirsch

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"The stories you are about to read are some of the most violent and sexually explicit in all of Western literature. They are tales of human passion in all of its infinite variety: adultery, seduction, incest, rape, mutilation, assassination, torture, sacrifice, and murder. . . ."

Sex. Violence. Scandal. These are words we rarely associate with the sacred text of the Bible. Yet in this brilliant book, Jonathan Kirsch recounts shocking tales that have been suppressed by religious authorities throughout history. Kirsch places each story within the political and social context of its time, delves into the latest biblical scholarship to explain why each one was originally censored, and shows how these ancient narratives hold valuable lessons for all of us.

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The Harlot by the Side of the Road: Forbidden Tales of the Bible By Jonathan Kirsch Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #706474 in Books
- Published on: 1998-03-03
- Released on: 1998-03-03
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.29" h x .89" w x 5.50" l, .65 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 378 pages

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Kirsch, an attorney and book critic, retells some of the juicier stories of the Bible in contemporary language. He expands upon the original biblical text to make the stories highly readable and includes with each the original text in modern translation and a brief sketch of the scholarly research and the speculation surrounding it. For those to whom Bible stories suggest "Disneyesque animals and simple uplifting moral lessons," this book may be a bit of a shock. Kirsch shows that the Bible is not a children's book. Then, as now, rape, incest, prostitution, murder, and strange religious cults were a part of life. As Kirsch says, "The Bible is a map of the human heart, and no secret chamber or hidden passage is left out." Kirsch contends that returning to the Bible can offer insight into modern issues. Mostly, however, he offers an irresistible popularization of some unfamiliar stories. Some readers will enjoy it; others will be highly offended. Recommended for public libraries. ?C. Robert Nixon, MLS, Lafayette, Ind.
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From [Booklist](#)

Although some of these biblical tales are not as "forbidden" as Kirsch makes out--both David's and Lot's stories have been on TV's *Mysteries of the Bible* they do contain far more sex and violence than most readers would expect to find in a holy book. Demonstrating meticulous research and an enticing style, Kirsch recounts the rape of Dinah, in which the seducer of Jacob's daughter, along with 300 of his men, are circumcised and then murdered when they are too weak from their surgery to run; the seduction of Judah by his daughter-in-law Tamar; and the murder of Uriah by David, in order that David may have Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. Along the way, Kirsch comments perceptively on the implications of numerous instances of what he calls the "gyno-sadism" of the Bible--women being raped, gang-raped, and murdered. Along with excerpts from the *Holy Scriptures according to Maoretic Text*, Kirsch retells the stories, places them in the context of the time, and thoroughly addresses levels of meaning for both the ancient and modern readers. Fascinating reading. *Ilene Cooper*

From Kirkus Reviews

An amateur Bible student's attempt to deal with the complexities of biblical sexuality. The oxymoronic subtitle says it all. Biblical episodes used for millennia for moral instruction are far from forbidden. And yet, in the unmistakable cadence of the tabloid TV narrator, L.A. Times book critic, novelist, and lawyer Kirsch guides us with wide eyes toward several biblical episodes containing incest or rape: "You mean that's in the Bible? Yes, dear reader, that's in the Bible. But wait--it gets worse." And so does Kirsch's retelling of these stories. Whether the typically sparse, clinical Hebrew Bible text is about Lot and his daughters, the rape of Dinah, or Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar (the harlot of the title), Kirsch's novelistic retellings have all the subtlety of a tabloid tale. In treating the title episode from Genesis 38, for example, in which the childless and widowed Tamar poses as a harlot to trick her father-in-law into impregnating her, the author calls it "an erotic fairy tale," even though all the details of Tamar's swaying breasts and "strange hunger" are his own invention. Kirsch pens in a description of Tamar's veil falling off, then speculates about how Judah's fervor might have been affected by the discovery that the harlot by the side of the road was his neglected daughter-in-law. While such fictionalizations surely eroticize the original texts, they purposefully cleanse them of any supernatural qualities. Lot's angels with blinding light become mere hunks with house lanterns. While Kirsch displays some familiarity with classical Bible critics, he appears perplexed by the concept that the Hebrew Bible's theology isn't Canaanite: "Another curious feature of the Hebrew Bible is the absence of a female counterpart to God." A retelling for those so unfamiliar with the sex and violence in the Bible that they think

it merits a PG rating. (Author tour) -- *Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Robert Eslinger:

Have you spare time for a day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? Sure, you can choose the suitable activity intended for spend your time. Any person spent their particular spare time to take a go walking, shopping, or went to typically the Mall. How about open or even read a book allowed The Harlot by the Side of the Road: Forbidden Tales of the Bible? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time together with your favorite's book, you can more intelligent than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have additional opinion?

Scott Settle:

The guide untitled The Harlot by the Side of the Road: Forbidden Tales of the Bible is the publication that recommended to you to read. You can see the quality of the reserve content that will be shown to you. The language that author use to explained their way of doing something is easily to understand. The author was did a lot of investigation when write the book, and so the information that they share to you is absolutely accurate. You also could get the e-book of The Harlot by the Side of the Road: Forbidden Tales of the Bible from the publisher to make you more enjoy free time.

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