



Women's Lives in Biblical Times

By Jennie R. Ebeling

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This volume describes the lifecycle events and daily life activities experienced by girls and women in ancient Israel examining recent biblical scholarship and other textual evidence from the ancient Near East and Egypt, including archaeological, iconographic and ethnographic data. From this Ebeling creates a detailed, accessible description of the lives of women living in the central highland villages of Iron Age I (ca. 1200-1000 BCE) Israel

The book opens with an introduction that provides a brief historical survey of Iron Age (ca. 1200-586 BCE) Israel, a discussion of the problems involved in using the Hebrew Bible as a source, a rationale for the project and a brief narrative of one woman's life in ancient Israel to put the events described in the book into context. It continues with seven thematic chapters that chronicle her life, focusing on the specific events, customs, crafts, technologies and other activities in which an Israelite female would have participated on a daily basis.

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Women's Lives in Biblical Times By Jennie R. Ebeling Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1107743 in Books
- Published on: 2010-04-07
- Released on: 2010-04-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .40" w x 6.00" l, .70 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 192 pages



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Editorial Review

Review

A delightful book! In *Women's Lives in Biblical Times*, Jennie Ebeling creatively combines an imaginative sketch of the life of an ancient Israelite woman with a rich array of biblical, archaeological, and comparative evidence, both compellingly to describe and convincingly to document the nature of everyday existence for the typical Israelite woman of the late second millennium BCE. The result is a study that is simultaneously learned and fun, a wonderful contribution to our understanding of Israelite women and tradition.

---*Susan Ackerman, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, USA.*

There have been a few attempts by biblical scholars to tell us about daily life in ancient Israel. But up to now there has been no full-scale account by anyone and none specifically about women, none by archaeologists who are now the best qualified to write about how it really was ordinary folk. This book, by a woman who is a professional field archaeologist working in Israel, and who also has sound training in biblical studies, is the book we have been waiting for. It is conceived in a partly fictional setting; the story of Orah; but it is based on the most recent and best archaeological information. Orah comes to life and speaks to us dramatically about her varied roles in her small world, her hardships and hopes. The story is riveting.

--- *William G. Dever, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA.*

"An explosion of fiction focusing on female biblical characters (most notably, Anita Diamant's 1997 novel "The Red Tent") spurred archeologist and scholar Jennie R. Ebeling to writer her own book, one that would be less dramatic but perhaps present a more realistic, complex picture of women's everyday lives in ancient Israel. While the core of *Women's Lives in Biblical Times* is nonfictional, Ebeling brings the subject to life in the person of 'Orah', a hypothetical woman living in a small village of the central highlands in the Iron Age 1 (circa 1200-1000 B.C.)...While we marvel at the stark differences between Orah's life and that of a modern Western woman, Ebeling connects the reader to this imagined woman's humanity, bringing the past to life in fascinating detail.

---*Teresa Malcolm, National Catholic Reporter, July 9, 2010*

The unique contribution of this work is Ebeling's creative approach... *Women's Lives in Biblical Times* will be a valuable tool not only in college and seminary classrooms, but also within congregations.---

Interpretation

Review

It is exciting to find a book that so knowledgeably presents state-of-the-art scholarship about women in Iron Age Israel. In *Women's Lives in Biblical Times*, Jennie Ebeling takes up a complex and important topic, one that merits intensive study. Her sophisticated analysis of archaeological data, biblical passages and anthropological studies ensures that scholars well versed in the field will find much new to consider. At the same time, her readable style of writing and the fictional storyline that enhances her scholarly presentation make this book appealing to students and other interested readers. *Women's Lives in Biblical Times* will be an asset in libraries and classrooms, and in personal collections.

---*Beth Alpert Nakhai, The University of Arizona, Tuscon, AZ, USA.*

Review

Jennie Ebeling, an expert in Syro-Palestinian archaeology, masterfully accomplishes her goal to explain what everyday life was like for early Israelite women in a book that is scholarly, engaging, and accessible to the general public. *Women's Lives in Biblical Times* is unique. Each chapter begins with "Orah's Story,"

fictional narratives about the life of an Israelite woman in the early Iron Age. Unlike popular novels based on biblical characters, the stories about Orah are informed and written by a scholar of the ancient Near East. Then, Ebeling uses her archaeological and historical expertise to explore stages in the life of women including birth, childhood, puberty, marriage, motherhood, widowhood, death, and burial. She explores the roles women played in agriculture, food preparation, and healthcare, as well as artistic celebrations such as dance and music. Ebeling's book will replace Diamant's novel, "The Red Tent", in several of my courses.

--- *Michael M. Homan, Xavier University of Louisiana, New Orleans, LA, USA.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bernice Hicks:

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