



# Sarah

*Marek Halter*

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## **Sarah** Marek Halter

Sarah's story 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 balks at the marriage her father has planned for her. On her wedding day, she impulsively flees to the vast, empty marshes outside the city walls, where she meets a young man named Abram, son of a tribe of outsiders. Drawn to this exotic stranger, Sarah spends one night with him and reluctantly returns to her father's house. But on her return, she secretly drinks a poisonous potion that will make her barren and thus unfit for marriage.

Many years later, Abram returns to Ur and discovers that the lost, rebellious girl from the marsh has been transformed into a splendid woman—the high priestess of the goddess Ishtar. But Sarah 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.

From the great ziggurat of Ishtar to 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.

## **Sarah Details**

Date : Published April 26th 2005 by Broadway Books (first published January 1st 2003)

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Author : Marek Halter

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# From Reader Review Sarah for online ebook

## Eh?Eh! says

this book is rather heinous. an intriguing take on the positions&beliefs of the characters but made ridiculous.

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## Joanie says

I was assured from several sources that if I enjoyed The Red Tent, I would enjoy Sarah. No two books could be further apart in their value. The Red Tent is a fascinating, nuanced, well researched tale that gives voice and agency to women who are only glanced over in the Bible. Sarah is a bland, generically romantic story that bears no resemblance to any characters or cultures from the Bible. I don't normally set books aside, but by page 156, it became apparent that Halter was going to reduce Sarah to nothing but two dimensional desires for romance and children. There is no nuance and no depth to Sarah's character. She exists to love Abram. She is not a person, she is a collection of ideas of what men think women want - a thing far removed from what women want.

The combination of a completely two dimensional heroine, a lack of research into Mesopotamian cultures and a strange disconnect from any Biblical Abram or Sarai renders this book completely unreadable.

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## Ashley says

This is a fantastic read, especially for those who are curious about events from the Bible and how they could have related to other stories and timelines. The story of Sarah, though some things might be stretched for fiction, is wildly interesting and spans over many decades, finally ending in her greatest triumph and wish, which was for a son, even if he came to her in old age. I grew up religious and always enjoyed the stories of the Bible because they seemed too incredible to believe and now as a non-religious adult, I enjoy the affordances that these stories allow for authors. Halter's version of Sarah and Abraham are not only likeable but human and offer a glimpse of what the real story could have been. Halter is a great writer, did these events of the Bible happen? Maybe, maybe not, but I had a great time reading his work.

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## Heidi The Hippie Reader says

A historical fiction about the early days of Abraham from Sarah's (Sarai's) point-of-view.

I think that this novel wasted an opportunity for a great story. Like a majority of women in the Bible, Sarai's life was largely untold. So, Marek Halter had a blank slate to work with.

And what he wrote for Sarai was a life of waiting. Waiting for Abram to talk to his god. Waiting for Abram to come back from war. Waiting to become pregnant. Waiting and wandering, looking for a home.

If I had written this story, Sarai would have been so busy doing something spectacular that she would have

hardly even noticed Abram's absence or presence. Maybe she invented a new form of weaving. Maybe she started her own business selling those herbed loaves that she was so proud of. Or, to introduce a fantasy twist, maybe she was secretly a vampire hunter, like *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*.

My point is: for a story about a woman, it was mostly about the men in her life. Which makes it not very different than the source material. And, in my mind, a disappointment.

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## Debbie says

***"Youth knows nothing of time, old age knows nothing but time. When you're young, you play hide-and-seek with the shade. When you're old, you seek out the warmth of the sun. But the shade is always there, while the sun is fleeting. It rises, crosses the sky, and disappears, and we wait impatiently for its return. These days, I love time as much as I love Isaac, the son I waited so long to see." Sarah***

*So is the moral of life... according to Sarah wife of Abraham who was once Sarai taken by Abram who spoke with God.*

This, was a wonderful Biblical Historical Fiction and I can't think of a moment when I wasn't glued to the page.

First, let me be clear, this is Historical fiction. Though it is based very closely on the Biblical characters, settings and events this is not your Bible companion or devotional. I'd not want anyone to become confused with what is word for word Biblical truth vs where there is an element of fictional liberty. That being said, however, this was an amazing interpretation of the story of Abram/Sarai aka Abraham/Sarah. It is fun to imagine the possible between or prequels within the verses and stanzas of the Holy Bible. What is already written, is important, we take word for word but what is unsaid, we can only assume. Those are the liberties that author Marek Halter takes and it makes an engrossing reading experience.

Most are all familiar with the Biblical story of Abram son of Terah. If not, you can meet him in Genesis 11:26 and continue to read to the end of his story. (Or until you just can't stop, the Bible is like that. So many stories and accounts.) Generally Abram/Abraham's journey and calling by God are known but what I found fascinating about this book was that this account is about Sarai/Sarah. From Sarai/Sarah's point of view. She's mentioned, but what if she could talk to us and tell us her story. This is what is within this book. Sarai/Sarah tells us where she's from. She tells us her pre-Abram life, her post Abram life and everything in between. Filled with her dreams, her yearning, her passion and her at times cynical nature, Sarai/Sarah is a very impressive and formidable woman.

If you're looking for the magical Hollywoodesque interpretations that we've all witnessed on the big screen, you're not going to find it. And I'm glad. I think that was the point of this delivery of the Abram/Sari story. I feel the author attempted to make these people more real and viable contrary to the Hollywood portrayal of booming voices and smoke and mirrors. When we have a God experience, it's just a happening only we know internally. This book sought to do just that, bring the real story out of the clouds and into the lives of real people. These people of old were ordinary people just like you and me who experienced and witnessed the extraordinary. They had doubts. They were confused. They had checkered pasts. They made bad decisions. They questioned their faith. They, called out to God in the wilderness and at times heard no voice.

This is also a story of a great love affair. When you allow a woman to tell her life's story from her point of view, you must be prepared to learn of romance. Abram and Sarai's love was an example for relationships to

stand the test of time. From their slow burning advance to the heights of passion. From their tests and betrayals, to their forgiveness and undying dedication. This is the story of a great love affair.

Mother Sarai/Sarah was a very intriguing woman. You will enjoy her story from the mother of many nations.

I give this book 5 stars. It was excellent. There are two other books in this series. I have them and am looking forward to both. I recommend of course to readers of Historical Fiction, Biblical Fiction readers and people who enjoy the voice of strong women unapologetically speaking the true journey of their life.

*Disclosure: I have no shame in admitting that I am of the Christian belief and a lot of my religious opinion happens to come within this review. My review. My opinion. However, I respect one's right to chose and honor their own beliefs, I expect the same respect in regards to any comments that reach outside of the scope of discussing this book. Respect.*

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## **Ellis says**

Another work of Biblically inspired works. Provides a neat perspective of Sarai (before she becomes Sarah). A good look at ancient Mesopotamian culture. Illustrates well the romance between Sarah and Abraham and how it grew from when they were Sarai and Abram into their old age and the miracle birth of their first child. Books of this sort make Biblical stories more personal and relatable.

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## **Leah says**

I have two ladies in my reading group to thank for this read. I remember Rebecca and Robyn saying how much they enjoyed *The Red Tent*, and as I browsed the book shelves at the local thrift store, I pulled the book *Sarah* because of its title, took a second look at it because one reviewer mentioned its likeness to *The Red Tent*, and thought a fictional narrative about the life of Sarah (and Abraham) would be interesting, to say the least.

Before, during and after my reading of *Sarah*, I read the biblical account and found these differences, which I understand are the result of poetic license/historical fiction writing:

1. Sarai was Abram's half sister, not some random youth living outside of the walls of Ur.
2. Abram was ten years older than Sarai, not a mere one or two.
3. "He took her as his wife" means a whole lot more to a historical fiction writer than to a Bible reader.
4. Sarai was beautiful, not ageless.
5. Sarai was taken into Pharaoh's house. Whether or not she was forced into a physical relationship with him is speculation.
6. Issac and Abraham went to mount Moriah; Halter's addition of Sarah's trek there seems a bit farfetched.
7. Isaac and Ishmael gathered to mourn Abraham's death, not Sarah's, like Halter narrates.

Before reading *Sarah*, I hadn't given much thought to: women's hygiene in biblical times (*The Chamber of Blood* was pretty interesting), family relationships (How would you react to a family member hearing God's voice and being instructed to leave everything and go to a new land?), faith and religion before God spoke to

Abram (How many gods did (and do) people believe in?!? How would they react to the idea of one god? What would it (and does it) take for people to believe?), nomadic life (No, thank you!), getting married and being barren (Oh, how differently we view marriage and parenthood in the US today.), jealousy spawned by extramarital affairs (Ouch.) and how marital love changes (and hopefully GROWS) through the years and the motivations/backgrounds of Lot, Hagar and Eliezer of Damascus.

In addition to those realizations, I appreciated the reminder of how badly we can mess things up when we fail to be patient and wait for God's plan. Halter's book doesn't necessarily focus on this "learning", but that's the lesson I've always associated with Abram/Abraham and Sarai/Sarah. Having spent the past two weeks reading and researching Genesis has once again made me think about what patience should look like in my life.

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## **Josephine (Jo) says**

This book brings the Bible story of Abram and Sarah to life! Although a work of fiction it has all the necessary facts taken from the Bible story that we all know and simply makes the different characters seem real, like seeing them in three dimensions where before they were in two. Mr. Halter has such an empathy with the female side of Sarah, he shows her courage but also her fears and vulnerability. We see what it was like to be a woman in the time of Abram, someone to be used as a piece of merchandise sold to the highest bidder, even if you came from a wealthy family and you were well treated by your parents, in the end your father owned you and then you married at a very young age and your husband owned you. Sarah had the courage to rebel and fight for the freedom to be with the man she loved, a choice that was a hard one which sent her on the journey into the desert, turning her back on riches and living instead in a tent as a nomad. Sarah also has to turn her back on the gods worshipped by her people and eventually came to believe in The One True God, YHWH, but even that was not a choice that meant an easy life, she and Abram still had to face many hardships and their faith was truly tested.

A really good read, it made me go back to my Bible and re-read the story of Sarah and Abram, seeing it in a new light.

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## **Alexis says**

Sarah by Marek Halter

After reading this for the second time (the first being in 2008 when I just commenced on a 4-year study of the Bible and Marek Halter's writings were recommended) I think I enjoyed it even more than the first time through.

I do appreciate how nothing in Halter's work contradicts the inspired writing of scripture, but just allows a 'story' to fill in the gaps of what we might imagine was the 'life' of the character in question.

My first time through I was not so familiar with the travels of Sarah and Abraham, but this time I was ready and waiting for the twists and turns in the plot and was anticipating the shifts and climaxes the story would have to present in line with scripture.

I have recently read The Book of Abraham as well, a long read but wonderful in giving insight to the history

of Judaism in the Western World from the time of the destruction of the 2nd Temple to 'modern' history. This novel, the fictionalized account of Sarah, is one of three books coursing through early Israelite history and I am excited to move on to Zipporah and then Lilah (not quite sure her role) to further invigorate my imagination about the lives of these women. The trick will be finding the intermediary work to connect King David's time to the era of the 2nd Temple.

When I was deep in the study of the Torah for the first time, I was almost afraid to read something fictional for fear of not being able to discern the line between scripture and fiction, but I would say that Marek Halter writes in a fashion that is safe and rewarding to the reader, more and more so for the one well-versed in scripture.

I highly recommend his works, but be ready for details and density in the larger books!

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### **Judy says**

The author's personal beliefs certainly influences his writing. Comparing the Red Tent, Sarah by Orson Scott Card and this book and can tell how the author's personal beliefs influenced the way they told the story. I thought the Red Tent and this book had a lot of interesting details about culture and customs; but I liked personality traits that Card gave to the characters best.

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### **Abby says**

This book is a fine example of expecting one thing and getting another. Objectively, not a bad book. If Sarah was just a basic historical fiction of the time, that is. But as a woman of the Bible, I was expecting a book with Biblically accurate story. It frustrated me so much I couldn't look at the book objectively.

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### **Weina says**

I've read the Red Tent and loved it, so when I picked out this book, I was curious.

The language of the book is delicate as the milk that flow in the Pharaoh's pool and timeless as Sarai's enthralling beauty. Many memorable lines lights up the ancient mind of Sarai and highlights the author's keen observation. The plots moves along with grace and right amount of suspense. It kept my attention.

My only regret, however, is I do not care for Sarai when she first appears. Why all the fuss about the blood? Why so willful, for what? The narrative also shifts at times, especially after Abram decides to leave his father. Sarai's mind and body fade into the wind, and Abram's world dominates, but his mind is never truly revealed. It is also dubious why Abram decides to send her to Pharaoh as his sister, not his wife. What's the difference? Why is it more acceptable to sell her as his sister, not as his wife? I do not understand why Abram wants to sacrifice Isaac either. Why there is a need to do so when his people are well-fed and his nation is expanding?

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## **Ann Keller says**

Sarai was born to one of the great lords of Ur. Hers was a life filled with wealth and beauty until the fateful day when she became a woman. Suddenly, she was expected to marry a man she'd never met and serve him as a virtual slave, his every whim her command. It was not to be borne!

Sarai flees her father's house and plunges into the countryside, where she stumbles across Abram, a simple man to whom she is strangely drawn. Although Sarai is caught and returned to her father, she takes a concoction rendering her barren. Her unique states propels her life along a different course and she becomes a priestess of Ishtar, Ur's goddess of war.

Once more, Abram enters her life and Sarai joins Abram at last, becoming his wife. Although the young couple seems happy enough, Sarai remains barren and no child is born to them. Sarai offers Abram her handmaid, Hagar, to give him the son he so desperately wants. A quarrel eventually breaks out between the two women, as they compete for position in Abram's world.

Told from the point of view of Sarai herself, this book is a unique glimpse into what life in Biblical times might have been like. At times, the story is raw and brutally realistic and at others, Halter's words create visions of inspiration for the faithful. Well written with great characterizations.

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## **Rose Ann says**

If you read and liked The Red Tent...you will like this as well.  
I read it in a handful of days.  
Cant wait to read Zipporah...the second of this trilogy!  
My thought to follow shortly...

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## **Serena says**

From the historical standpoint of this book, I loved it. I loved the scenarios Mr. Halter put out to explain the Bible stories, and I loved the way he described the cities of Ur, the palace of the Pharoah, and the lands of Canaan and Hebron. I thought the characteristics of Sarai/Sarah were really well done, and I loved the personality she was given.

However the book was slightly too sexual for my taste. I realize that this was part of statement being made that Bible is not a pure and holy book, but still, it was too much in this book. I found myself skipping over the passages that were becoming slightly pornographic, and in general I do not think that I want to read the next book. I shudder to think how Mr. Halter will describe Moses and Zipporah.

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## **Manny says**

**The Book of Marek**



1. Now in those days there dwelled in the land of the France'ites a man named Ma'rek, who was a prophet of the Lord.
2. And Ma'rek had suffered much for his faith and undergone many trials. And he had seen how strange are the Lord's ways.
3. Now Ma'rek had need of gold. And he prayed to the Lord, saying, show me how I might get me riches, that I may further exalt Thy name.
4. Then that night an angel came to Ma'rek in a dream. And the angel said, write thou a history of Abraham's wife, that is called Sarah, and tell Abraham's story as she did see it; this is the Lord's command.

**The rest of this review is available elsewhere (the location cannot be given for Goodreads policy reasons)**

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### **Selma says**

U epohi sukoba kraljeva i religija, u doba sujeverja i ?arobnica, u vrijeme kada su sudbinu žene odre?ivali muškarci, ro?ena je Sara kao Sarai, k?erka plemi?a iz grada Ura, u kraljevini Sumera i Akada. Od djetinjstva, koje naglo prestaje pojavom djevoja?ke krvi i udajom, ona ustaje protiv uloge žene i k?erke, bježi sa svog vjen?anja, uzima magi?ne trave ?arobnice i preokre?e svoju sudbinu.

Jedan dje?ak, Avram, postaje njen spasilac, njena nada, ali i njeno iskušenje. Donosi joj sre?u, patnju i poniženje. Jedna žena – sveštenica, kraljica i robinja. Nose?i u sebi tragi?nu grešku – ljepotu koju vrijeme ne umanjuje i pred kojom kle?e kraljevi – ona provodi cio život, u kojem prolazi kroz sve: sre?u, nevolju, uspone i padove, lišena jedine stvari za kojom žudi – da postane majka. I upravo je u toj želji njena snaga – sve se menja i prolazi, ?ak i ljubav, samo neuslišena želja ostaje.

Biblijska Sara, majka onih koji vjeruju u jedinog Boga, u stvari je svaka žena. Ona, ma koliko bila lijepa i mo?na, nosi u sebi nešto nepromjenjivo ranjivo i nježno - žensku dušu, koja je lijepa i slobodna, ali beskrajno usamljena. Ona je vje?ita tajna svake žene, njena istinska ljepota i dom njene tuge.

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### **Jess ✨Harbinger of Blood-Soaked Rainbows✨ says**

This is like 3.5 stars rounded up.

I rounded up because this was a fun read and easy to get through. I enjoyed the historical aspect of it, but I am in no way knowledgeable about ancient Mesopotamian history or culture so I have no idea whether or not this is historically or culturally accurate or well-researched. This is probably why I enjoyed this novel as much as I did, as I didn't need to nitpick for accuracy.

I have to admit, I am a sucker for fictional reinterpretations of history and historical figures, and I thought for the most part, that Marek Halter did a pretty decent job of re-imagining the history of Sarai and Abram from Biblical Genesis. As there is no recorded history of either of these two figures other than what is recorded in a few chapters of Genesis, the author had to fictionalize large portions of this story.

Sarai is a beautiful daughter of a rich man, and the novel opens with her preparing for an arranged marriage to a complete stranger. The willful Sarai escapes the wall of her father's city and meets Abram, a darker-skinned young man who is travelling with his family of nomads. She and Abram have an instant connection, and though she spends the night with him, decides ultimately to return to her father's house the next morning. Sarai decides to visit a medicine woman in the village who gives her a potion to make her temporarily barren so that she will be unfit to marry the man her father has chosen for her. The young and foolish Sarai doesn't follow the woman's directions properly, and the poison has affected her womb indefinitely.

Declared unfit for marriage due to her barrenness, Sarai becomes a high priestess to one of the goddesses of the city. However, she continues to be haunted by thoughts and dreams of the handsome and enigmatic young man who showed kindness and hospitality to her years earlier. When Abram re-enters Sarai's life again, she leaves her privileged life behind to follow him and his family of nomadic herdsman.

The descriptions of the culture of the times and the landscape are probably what I loved best about this novel. Sarai and Abram finally make their journey all the way to ancient Egypt, and I, being a lover of all things Egyptian, found this plotline to be the highlight of the novel. *Sarah* also presents a beautiful portrait of marriage, though I wouldn't call this book a romance at all. Sarai and Abram's union is not at all perfect, and her barrenness presents more than a few problems, insecurities, and resentments to come to light. In those days, a man's worth was dependent on how many sons a wife could produce, and for Abram, the leader of his tribe, to have none was a very big deal. The portrayal of their marriage in this novel is at times tender and beautiful, but also at times ugly and tumultuous. Abram sometimes comes off as a loving husband and competent ruler, and at times comes off as a tremendous ass. However, it is this dual nature of their relationship that I find refreshing, as I believe it is realistic and believable, and suffered from a lot of the problems married couples face in real life. I liked that this author inserted some realism into the romantic plot, and was relieved that he didn't make this almighty biblical couple larger than life and cliché.

Another theme that I enjoyed is the idea of beauty, and what being beautiful means. Sarai is described as being the most beautiful woman in the tribe. Her beauty is so intense that it is at times described as being almost unnatural, or divine. She also does not age at the same rate as the other ladies, and her youth seems to be with her always, even as her husband ages and becomes slower. Her beauty becomes a source of resentment for Abram, as she cannot bear children. Sarai also catches the eyes of many men, including Abram's nephew Lot. Sarai also resents her beauty, and believes her youth to be a curse. She believes it is her punishment for taking the poison in her youth to always be young and beautiful, but to never receive the gift of children. She is stuck in this state most of the way through the book, and I thought it was interesting to hear her thoughts about the subject, particularly when Abram's attentions begin to shift toward her younger handmaid, Hagar, who is able to bear Abram a son.

All in all, I liked the historical plot, and though this isn't the best historical novel I've ever read, I found it enjoyable and different. I will be interested in reading the rest of this trilogy sometime in the future.

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## **Barbara says**

SARAH is one of three novels (The Canaan Trilogy) presented as a series, using women of the Old Testament as the central characters in each one. Of the three women, the person of Sarah is by far the most well known to people. This novel imagines Sarah as a young girl born of privilege in Ur, a Sumerian city-state. She is destined for an arranged marriage. As the reader would expect, she rebels against this destiny and consequently finds herself on a far-different path from that of obedient wife, mother and homemaker.

After a series of events which essentially render her unsuitable for the marriage which her father has tried to contract for her, the Sarah of the novel ends up as the high priestess of the great (local variety) goddess of war. Along the way, she has met a rough, earthy, yet sensitive, fellow named Abram, and she just can't get him out of her mind. As one would know from even a cursory knowledge of the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament, Sarah (Sarai) and Abram do manage to reunite and set off on a long, nomadic journey, guided by the unseen and compelling God that has spoken to Abram and called him out to be the patriarch of His people, settling in the land of Canaan.

While the first parts of the book are extra-Biblical in their settings and story, the subsequent parts call to mind the sparse details which we can glean from Genesis. The details from Genesis are fleshed out and expanded into the fictional account of how Abram and Sarai lived their lives and came to be the founders of "a great nation." This book in particular reminds its readers that Abram-Abraham did not come to be a patriarch absent the presence of a strong, capable and significant matriarch.

One more thing: I did not realize until after I had read this book that it is a translation from French. The translator (Howard Curtis) has done a lovely job, using beautiful language, descriptive turns of phrase, and a deft hand in presenting Marek Halter's original work for the English-speaking reader.

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## **Tessha says**

Mr. Halter takes extensive creative liberties with sacred historical figures. I do prefer Orson Scott Card's version better - Women of Genesis series with a book also titled Sarah - mainly because those books are less sexual and likely closer to actual events.

This version is well written and easy to read. Sarai's emotions are strong pulling you into the center of her heart. Halter creates a childhood for her with no historical connection but is interesting. Much of the first part of the book focuses on that part of her story.

From the first time she meets Abram you can't help but fall in love with him too as seen through her eyes. Her youthful crush is all consuming that she takes action to dodge marriage arrangements knowing she could only truly care for him. They meet again and Abram takes the princess from Ur into the wilderness to be his wife where she never looks back.

Halter then takes a spin on Sarai's perception about her renowned beauty and how it was the curse linked to her barren state. Her deep secret tears at her core. None-the-less, Abram's so in love with her and his newly found relation with the One God that he's not concerned about an heir. She doesn't have the same frame of reference and confidence and thus carries a painful burden, largely by herself.

The survival of her people during drought had much to do with her actions when they arrived in Egypt, but at great personal cost. Her heart ache drives her to hide her face behind a red veil while Abram continues to grow a nation. In time, she too comes to know the One God and witnesses a miracle beyond reason which will be retold for generations - a son from her own barren womb.

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