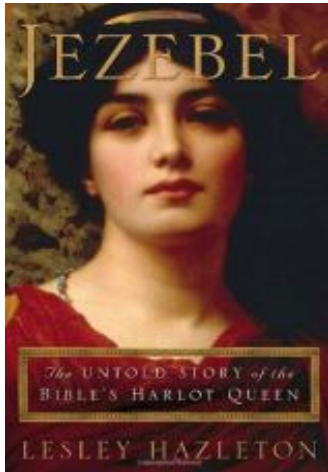

Jezebel: The Untold Story of the Bible's Harlot Queen

by Lesley Hazleton



About the Book

There is no woman with a worse reputation than Jezebel, the ancient queen who corrupted a nation and met one of the most gruesome fates in the Bible. Her name alone speaks of sexual decadence and promiscuity. But what if this version of her story, handed down to us through the ages, is merely the one her enemies wanted us to believe? What if Jezebel, far from being a conniving harlot, was, in fact, framed?

In this remarkable new biography, Lesley Hazleton shows exactly how the proud and courageous queen of Israel was vilified and made into the very embodiment of wanton wickedness by her political and religious enemies. **Jezebel** brings readers back to the source of the biblical story, a rich and dramatic saga featuring evil schemes and underhanded plots, war and treason, false gods and falsers humans, and all with the fate of entire nations at stake. At its center are just one woman and one man --- the sophisticated Queen Jezebel and the stark prophet Elijah. Their epic and ultimately tragic confrontation pits tolerance against righteousness, pragmatism against divine dictates, and liberalism against conservatism. It is, in other words, the original story of the unholy marriage of sex, politics, and religion, and it ends in one of the most chillingly brutal scenes in the entire Bible.

Here at last is the real story of the rise and fall of this legendary woman --- a radically different portrait with startling contemporary resonance in a world mired once again in religious wars.

Discussion Guide

1. Hazleton writes on page 2, "There is a magic in names." What connotation did the name "Jezebel" hold for you prior to reading the book? Has this new vision of the "harlot queen" changed this understanding?
2. "Strip away the seven veils, and what we find is a startlingly contemporary story," (page 10). In what ways can

Jezebel's story be considered modern?

3. Hazleton incorporates vivid descriptions of the modern-day Middle East into her account of Jezebel's life and death. Which locales stood out for you? Why?

4. The two women, Jezebel and Lady Macbeth, are almost twin images; indeed it is quite likely that Shakespeare took his cue for Macbeth from Kings, (page 113). Can you think of other women in myth or literature who share similarities with Jezebel?

5. Hazleton describes Jezebel's rise to power and ultimate murder as the foundation story of modern radical fundamentalism, (page 6). What parallels can be drawn between Jezebel's story and radicalized religion in our age?

6. Proposing that if Jezebel hadn't been persecuted and killed, the path of Israelite history would have been completely altered, Hazleton writes, Whether this is a matter of irony or justice I leave to the reader to decide. (page 13). What do you think? Was the aftermath of Jezebel's death a cruel twist of fate, or was it the inevitable result?

7. Discuss prominent historical male figures in Jezebel's story. How did they help or hinder her?

8. Hazleton periodically employs the historical imagination (page 13) in her re-creation of Jezebel's point of view. What did you think of this device? Did it enhance your understanding of Jezebel's perspective?

9. Discuss the violent nature of Jezebel's death, as well as other instances of violence that the author notes in the book. Does the cruelty exhibited to Jezebel come as a surprise to you? Why or why not?

10. What defines a feminist to you in today's era? Would you consider Jezebel one?

Author Bio

Lesley Hazleton is the author of three acclaimed books about the Middle East --- **Israeli Women, Where Mountains Roar**, and **Jerusalem, Jerusalem**. Her most recent book is **Mary: A Flesh-and-Blood Biography of the Virgin Mother**. A former psychologist, she reported from Israel for Time magazine, and has written on Middle Eastern politics for *The New York Times*, *Esquire*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Review of Books*, and other publications. She lives in Seattle, Washington.

Critical Praise

This riveting biography breaks through all our preconceptions about Jezebel. In Hazleton's hands, the real story of the harlot queen is a vivid and magnificent drama with direct relevance to our own time. You'll never read the Hebrew bible the same way again.

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Harlot Queen**

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