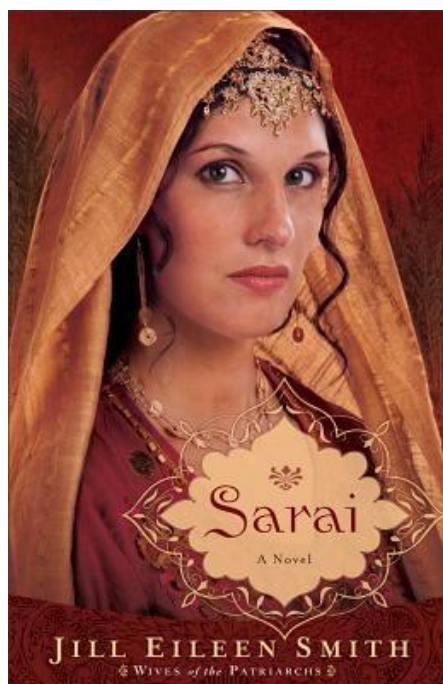




## Sarai

*Jill Eileen Smith*

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# Sarai

*Jill Eileen Smith*

**Sarai** Jill Eileen Smith

**He promised her his heart. She promised him a son. But how long must they wait?**

When Abram finally requests the hand of his beautiful half sister Sarai, she asks one thing--that he promise never to take another wife as long as she lives. Even Sarai's father thinks the demand is restrictive and agrees to the union only if she makes a promise in return--to give Abram a son and heir. Certain she can easily do that, Sarai agrees.

But as the years stretch on and Sarai's womb remains empty, she becomes desperate to fulfill her end of the bargain, lest Abram decide that he will not fulfill his. To what lengths will Sarai go in her quest to bear a son? And how long will Abram's patience last?

Combining in-depth research and vivid storytelling, Jill Eileen Smith brings to life the beautiful and inscrutable Sarai in this remarkable story of love, jealousy, and undaunted faith.

"*Sarai* gives 'the rest of the story'--Abram and Sarai's journey toward faith. Don't hesitate to open this rich biblical drama for new insight and a new perspective."--Lyn Cote, author of *Her Abundant Joy*

"An absorbing visit to the past, filled with wonderful details, fascinating characters, and an unforgettable ending."--Maureen Lang, author of *Springtime of the Spirit* and *Whisper on the Wind*

"Jill has a special insight into her characters and a great love for biblical stories. I highly recommend *Sarai*. You will not be disappointed."--Hannah Alexander, award-winning author of *Eye of the Storm*

**Jill Eileen Smith** is the author of the bestselling *Michal*, *Abigail*, and *Bathsheba*, all part of the Wives of King David series. Her research into the lives of biblical women has taken her from the Bible to Israel, and she particularly enjoys learning how women lived in Old Testament times. Jill lives with her family in southeast Michigan.

## Sarai Details

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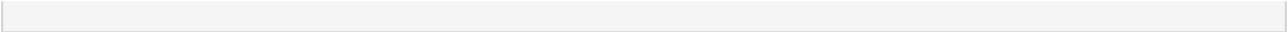
Author : Jill Eileen Smith

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Genre : Christian Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Biblical Fiction, Christian, Fiction, Biblical

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## From Reader Review Sarai for online ebook

### Catherine says

Now, I will admit that I didn't finish this book; I just absolutely couldn't. The plot was dragged out for far too long. I only read about 70 pages, and I was completely bored out of my mind. The only problem that our heroine was facing was that she couldn't get pregnant. I mean, not to belittle this woman's most difficult challenge in life, but COME ON. Think about something else for a change. Almost every chapter depicted her worry of not being able to have a child with her dear, loving husband. She was so worried about breaking a promise to her father. Promising that you will have a child was not a really smart thing to do. It's not like you have absolute control over this sort of thing. Also, I just couldn't really get a mental picture of the characters. All I know is that Sarai is the most beautiful woman on the planet and that Abram is a seventy-five-year-old man. Now, I understand that back then people lived to be 900 years old. But it kind of seemed a bit off-putting to picture an old man being all lovey-dovey with the young woman on the cover. And when I say young, I mean REALLY young. She looks like she could be in her late 20s. It just doesn't really seem to add up. Also, the way the author wrote Sarai made her seem like a whiny sixteen-year-old girl rather than a mature wife of a respected leader.

All in all, I just couldn't handle it anymore. It's a shame it didn't hold my interest. I had high hopes for this book. It would be nice to read about Sarah's POV, but, sadly, this book didn't cut it.

P.S. I am well aware that this book is an adaptation of the famous Biblical account of Abraham. Not saying that this was a total disgrace, but it didn't really capture the spirituality of faith in the Almighty God. I think that is where this book is seriously lacking. Instead of all the doom and gloom, why not add the meaning of hope and faith for a better future?

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### Laura says

I love biblical fiction! I think it is the perfect way to get someone who has never picked up a bible, interested in the stories that the bible holds. Sarai, by author Jill Eileen Smith is the type of book that does just that.

The first book in the Wives of the Patriarchs, Smith has taken the story of Abram and Sarai and filled in all those missing pieces that makes these biblical characters real and vibrant. I love how she stuck close to scripture yet was able to use her imagination just enough to fill in those "what if's".

Abram has taken Sarai his half-sister to be his bride. She asks one thing of him - to promise never to take another wife as long as she lives. In return, she also makes a promise to her father - to give Abram a son and heir. But as the years go by, it becomes quite clear that Sarai will never have a child. When Abram assures her that Adonai has promised him a son, Sarai struggles with belief and makes a mistake that will cost her dearly.

This story follows Abram and Sarai from the land of Ur to the land of Canaan, right up until God changes their names to Abraham and Sarah. Even though I knew the story, I was very intrigued and couldn't put the book down because the author did a tremendous job of bringing the characters alive and she did her research, which made the reading all the more enjoyable.

Captivating and entertaining, you will want to pick up this book! I give it 5 out of 5 stars!

## Chantelle says

I don't know what it is about biblical fiction that I love so much, but I do. I blame The Red Tent, I think.

This was a free kindle book, the story of Abraham and Sarah. I enjoyed it. It definitely held my interest, and I learned a lot from it as well.

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## Meghan says

I've read several of Smith's books and while I loved the first few I stopped reading "Michal" partway through and was very disappointed with this one's ending. The story itself is wonderfully imaginative and I liked the speculation throughout. At the very end, however, after all this intricate story and sharing of Sarai's heartache of infertility we basically get: a year later Isaac was born, Abraham was happy, the end. Gahhh! Really? No description of how she felt when she figured out she was pregnant? Abraham's response to this amazing miracle? Nope, just...Adonai visited, Sarah laughed, Isaac was born, the end. I was very much looking forward to finding out how Sarah felt, how the news was received in their camp, how her birth went, etc...all details we discovered with the other women, Hagar especially.

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## Lorraine says

SUMMARY: Sarai, the last child of her aged father, is beautiful, spoiled, and used to getting her own way. Even as a young girl, she is aware of the way men look at her, including her half brother Abram. When Abram finally requests Sarai's hand, she asks one thing--that he promise never to take another wife as long as she lives. Even her father thinks the demand is restrictive and agrees to the union only if Sarai makes a promise in return--to give Abram a son and heir. Certain she can easily do that, Sarai agrees. But as the years stretch on and Sarai's womb remains empty, she becomes desperate to fulfill her end of the bargain--lest Abram decide that he will not fulfill his. To what lengths will Sarai go in her quest to bear a son? And how long will Abram's patience last?

REVIEW: Having read several biblical fiction series, I found this book started somewhat slow but grew and developed along the way. The story of Sarai/Sarah and Abram/Abraham is a familiar one to Christians. Smith added life to it with realistic characters, vivid descriptions of the places and time period, yet Biblical accuracy.

Sarai tried so often to help God along and found, as we all do, that God's plans are way better than any of ours. She also displayed the impatience that so many of us founder in when God's timetable doesn't match ours. Abram, in contrast, tried to follow God's plans; but instead let Sarai talk him into her plans which only resulted in creating more problems.

I felt like the ending was rather abrupt as Sarah is pregnant and the story goes not further. Perhaps the author's reasoning was that she intends to continue the story in the second book of this series. A good historical fiction read that I would recommend to anyone who enjoys Biblical fiction.

FAVORITE QUOTES: "Don't look back. You cannot undo what is past."

"There was no sense guessing the future. Adonai alone knew what was to come."

"He knew Adonai could be trusted to keep His word, but it was the details of not knowing, not understand, that made Abram weak..."

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### **Kristen Kooistra says**

A well-written account of what Sarai's life might've looked like as she awaited Issac's birth. Smith did a good job of sticking to the actual events and filling in the blanks where there are blanks. There's a good sense of the customs and life-style of the time period(in both Sarai's family and outside of it).

I've never liked Sarai much, so there's only so much a book about her can do for me. She started out as a fairly sympathetic character, but about the time Hagar gets added to the mix things go south.

It's Sarai's choice to give Hagar to Abram and the poor servant does as she's told and it's like a no win situation. I can see why Sarai would be upset with the situation and perhaps because of customs and promises feel like there was no choice, but at the end of the day she still made a choice and I've never been okay with her treatment of Hagar.

I think the nastiness, the jealousy, the flip-flop of emotions, and so on that Sarai experiences in the book are probably near accurate of what the real Sarai went through and I can't change history, so I support the writing of the story this way, but I don't have to like Sarai. :D

It's a little hard at times to picture the characters because people lived longer back then and I just assumed they aged the same physically, but here we have a 60 year old lady(at the start) who's so beautiful that Abram's worried about her being taken and that lady on the cover certainly doesn't look 60. Even as the years pass, it's a very long time before Sarai's beauty is no longer mentioned or that Abram actually acts anything like we'd expect from an aging old man.

Overall, an enjoyable read that went by quickly and had a really good immersive feel. It just had a MC that I can't connect with(which I knew going into the story.).

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### **Stephanie says**

Sarai tells the story about the agreement between God and Abram. The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you." Abram and Sarai made some hard choices to leave their father's household and follow God into the unknown, looking for city whose architect and builder is God. Not like Abram who always keep the faith, Sarai sometimes had doubt and do the wrong choices. But in the end God always keep His promises. He has made everything beautiful in His time.

Beside Sarai there is another woman character which is Melah, Lot's wife. Melah and Sarai had lived in the same circumstances and faced the same problems, but when it comes to how live in faith, they made the opposites choice. Melah didn't follow the instruction of "don't look back" in the way they escaped from Sodom and in return she was turned into a pillar of salt.

Honestly at first I was totally bored with the plot and even stop read after some chapters. But I pushed myself to continue and finally finished it. Jill Eileen Smith did the good job to bring the bible story to life. Jill bring it through their characters and emotions which can't we find in reading the bible. Maybe this what approximately happened in that decades before. I enjoyed reading this historical fiction.

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## Renee says

*"What a failure her life had been. Would she have lied to God if she'd had more faith, been more righteous? How could she possibly have a son at her age? And yet, if she had believed all along . . ." ~from **Sarai** ~*

These lines from Jill Eileen Smith's novel share the anguish Sarai feels as she realizes how often she has missed God's favor because she cannot bring herself to trust Him. God blesses Sarai with a very good life—especially for a woman of that time period. She has incredible beauty, an adoring, godly husband, wealth, servants, health. (Who wouldn't want to look young and lovely at age sixty-plus?) Yet jealousy, fear, and doubt eat away at her happiness. When she compounds this with idolatry and bad choices, she sets in motion events that bring much pain both to Sarai and those she loves.

Though familiar with the biblical account, this book brought Sarai's story to life for me. I rejoiced with her, hurt with her, worried for her . . . ***And I couldn't help but think about heaven. I've often wondered how we will relate to other Christian women from cultures and time periods so different from ours. Stories like this remind me of all the sorrows, hopes, and dreams we share with the ones we'll meet in eternity.***

Rich in historical detail, *Sarai* is a great read!

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## Laura says

Jill amazes me with the in-depth insights in her Biblical historical novels. *Sarai: A Novel* is no different! Though this may be a familiar story from the Bible to many of you, Jill brings it to life through the depths of her characters and their interactions throughout the unfolding of their lives.

From the introduction of idol worship, the call of Abram to Canaan, and the eventual settling in the land, we see the personal struggles, jealousies, regrets, greed, and anxieties of each character, particularly Abram, Sarai, Lot, Meleh, and Hagar. The nomadic lifestyle challenges their constitution, spiritual life, and their trust in God, having come from a more comfortable lifestyle. Jill is able to bring you into the story and let you experience the uncomfortable bedding, the 'archaic' method of cooking, the grit of the dust storms, the whispers of barrenness, the mocking of Hagar, and the fear of Pharaoh in Egypt.

The inner thoughts and emotions of betrayal, rejection, barrenness, and grumbling are aptly described, making them personal to your own thought life. Repentance and forgiveness become a necessary component of the story, as well in our lives. Abram and Sarai's faith in God's promise to Abram is resonant and tested throughout the whole book.

The relationship between Abram and Sarai is so intimate, and yet strained with the birth of Abram's first son. The latter situation is one that I would find difficult to deal with. Sarai's feelings came across loud and clear, and I doubt I'd feel much different! Only by the grace of God could one withstand such a predicament!

Jill brought this ancient story into today's world without compromising the Biblical rendering of the story. For a touching, revealing version of Abram and Sarai, this is the book to read!

This book was provided by Donna Hausler, Publicity Assistant at Baker Publishing Group, in exchange for my honest review. No monetary compensation was exchanged.

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### **Darlene Franklin says**

Enjoyed this very much, the play between Sarai, Hagar, and Lot's wife, named "Melah." She drew parallels between Sarai and Melah's positions that I had never considered before. How Sarai grew into a faith in Abraham's God, while Melah rejected Him. That much is clear from the biblical story, but I won't say any more.

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### **Heather says**

I'm in the middle of a women's bible study on the book of Genesis at my church and thought it would be fun to read some biblical fiction set during that time frame. This book fit the bill perfectly. We just recently finished studying Abraham and Sarah and I enjoyed getting to see their story fleshed out a bit more. This was well written and was easy to get sucked into. I'm looking forward to reading the other books in the series.

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### **Cindy says**

Jill Eileen Smith does such a wonderful job of bringing stories we have read all our lives in the Bible to life. I can honestly say after years of reading many different authors and books, that I enjoy the way that Jill does Biblical fiction best. She is true to the scriptural passages and the historical facts, but also bringing in her own take of the stories and making that come to life. Her descriptive powers are great, you can picture the scenes in your mind, and you feel like your a part of the story!

The story of Sarai (Sarah) wife of Abram (Abraham) is one of my favorite stories. But the way that Jill brought to life the disappointment that Sarai must have felt each and every year that passed without the promised child, was wonderful. I found myself crying as she dealt with the jealousy she felt when Hagar birthed Ishmael, and even the jealousy she felt between the relationship with Abram and Ishmael, just brings to your attention that the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Bible were as human as we are. Truly a story that you will enjoy! I was also fascinated with the relationship between Lot's wife and Sarai, it was truly interesting to see how they interacted with each other. And the horrible downfall of Lot's wife as they moved into Sodom and further away from the presence of Adonai. A great book!! 313 pages \$US14.99 4 stars.

This book was provided by Revell for review purposes. No payment was provided for this review.

Available March 2012 from your favorite seller of Revell Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group.

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## Naomi Bowen says

A very well researched and written look into the life of Sarah, a Biblical figure who isn't talked about much. Yet I think Sarah can be an encouragement to all of us. She made mistakes and yet God praises her for her faith in the book of Hebrews. He is gracious!

Perhaps Jill Eileen Smith did too good a job at portraying Sarah's humanity - I found her pretty annoying, especially in the first half of the book. But that's just me being picky. Another reason I rated the book down is that the ending feels very rushed.

On the plus side, the book explores a lot that you'd never normally think of. What was Abraham and Sarah's relationship actually like? How was it for Hagar?

All in all, a book that reminds you God's timing is always better than yours!

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## Michelle says

This novel brought the Old Testament to life for me. Once again Jill Eileen Smith has given me a greater appreciation for the scriptures. I knew from reading the Old Testament that Sarai was bitter and jealous of Hagar when she felt like she had to give Abram her maidservant at the time she believed she was no longer physically capable of bearing children. This story shows how difficult it was for her, and for me it created a greater empathy for her plight because I better understood her pain. The culture in her day placed such importance on child bearing, and to have everyone around you bearing children had to be really hard. The scenario shown by the author was a great illustration of how taking matters into your own hands often makes things ten times worse than just trusting God. I pitied Hagar and her situation more than ever once I saw her suffering through the character in the story. I love how the author does this with each novel.

When it came to the whole situation with Abram telling Pharaoh that Sarai was his sister, I always understood the story in part, but this novel gave backing to the many fears that Abram had for his deception by showing the reasons he said those things. I never understood how deeply it must have hurt Sarai not to be treated as his wife for so long and to be neglected (in many ways) by her husband in the name of protection. I could see how this was selfish on Abram's part and at one point I laughed when Sarai asked Abram if he cared if she died (and implied he was only worried about his own neck.) So while the novel shows the struggles Abram, Sarai, and Hagar had, it also showed their faith. I enjoyed the subplot with Lot as well and his family drama. All in all this was an engaging read. I didn't see any inconsistencies with Scripture and feel like the author did a great job filling in the blanks to bring about a clearer picture of the past. Well done!

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## Abbie Riddle says

Jill Eileen Smith wowed readers with her Wife of David series in which she explored the lives of Michal, Abigail and Bathsheba. Now she is embarking on a new series called the Wives of the Patriarchs that promises to be just as exciting and engaging.

I was so excited to receive a review copy of this book. When I was first introduced to this author it was through the book Bathsheba, which I devoured with great excitement. I expected great things with this book and was not disappointed in the least. In fact her Wife of David series hooked me on biblical fiction as it causes the reader to revisit the biblical accounts and to look deeper than the surface, realizing that these are more than just historical accounts, or stories of legends - they are the actual accounts of living, breathing

people who impacted their world and continue, years later to impact our world.

Sarai follows the life of Sarah and Abraham and offers a new look at a very well known bible story. My perspective of this woman and her life is forever changed. This book drove me into deeper study of the biblical account of this woman's journey and her story.

A beautiful woman admired by many, Sarai loved her half brother Abram - and that love was returned. However, she demanded a promise of her future husband that her father thought was too much - she demanded that he promise to have only one wife. In return her father made her promise that she provide Abram with a son and if she could not fulfill her promise that she would release him from the promise she had demanded. In her human pride Sarai accepted thinking the promise demanded of her was easy to complete. Little did she know that God had a plan much greater than Sarai - one that included her learning that in her own strength nothing could be accomplished and that she did not control the events of life.

Old but still a beauty to be reckoned with Sarai can scarce stand the pitiful looks she receives from Lot's young wife who was always bearing another child. She wilted under Meleh's scornful tone and fought the urge not to bend to Maleh's request that Sarai offer sacrifice to the false gods for favor. The weight of her own rash and prideful promise weighs on her heart and soul as she struggles to understand the God of Abram and to believe in Abram's love Sarai becomes restless to fulfill her promise.

When Abram is called to leave his family and to travel to a place God will show this couple embarks on a journey that will forever change their lives. This journey will test their faith in the spoken promises of God as well as their knowledge of Him, it will test their love for God and each other, and will drive them into an ever deepening knowledge of who God really is. Sarai will come face to face with a great and faithful God who outshines any man-made god, who upholds the weak, leads His children and always, always keeps His promises. I believe that she ultimately learns that we do not have any thing to promise any other nor do we have the ability to keep any promise we make other than through God and Him living in us.

This book is a rich tapestry of the full range of human emotion and frailty and the God who brings all imperfection into a beautiful work of art that screams His glory.

If you have ever struggled with your faith, wavered between the things of this world and the things that are unseen in God - find inspiration in Sarai as she too walks this road and in the end discovers the One True God. If your faith has been tested and the promises of God have grown dim in your sight - if you have doubted that He will in fact answer - take courage and see the example in this story of just how faithful God is.

Jill Eileen Smith - I must give it up to you. This is your talent - opening God's word and bringing life to stories that we often do not give enough thought to. You cause readers to stop and really think about these people in a new light - bringing life to the characters and a depth that we often do not allow ourselves the luxury to explore when reading the stories in the bible.

Thanks to Revell for this review copy.

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