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Sotah: A Novel



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Par Naomi Ragen : Sotah: A Novel before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sotah: A Novel:

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Description : Description du produitSet against the backdrop of Jerusalem's ancient rituals, a contemporary story of sacred and profane love, and a young woman's struggle to reconcile tradition with freedom. Ninety-three weeks on the best-seller list. Sotah introduces a family with three daughters approaching the age of marriage: Devorah, Dina and Chaya Leah. In the strict orthodoxy of their world, a sotah is a wife suspected of infidelity who can be tried by ordeal to prove she is guiltless. Which sister could be capable of such a thought, let alone the act? Into the pious world of strict chaperoning, modest clothing, where a married woman's hair must never be seen by a man other than her husband -insinuates this serpent suggestion of evil. Ragen's powerful tale of three sisters spins endless questions: Which one? Could she? Did she? What changes could come into this orderly world because of unthinking actions?

Prsentation de l'diteurBeautiful, fragile Dina Reich, a young woman in Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox haredi

enclave, stands accused of the community's most unforgivable sin: adultery. Raised with her sisters to be an obedient daughter and a dutiful wife, Dina secretly yearned for the knowledge, romance, and excitement that she knew her circumscribed life would never satisfy. When her first romance is tragically thwarted, she willingly enters into an arranged marriage with a loving but painfully quiet man. Dina's deeply repressed passions become impossible to ignore, finding a dangerous outlet in a sudden and intense obsession with a married man, with terrible consequences. Exiled to New York City, Dina meets Joan, a modern secular woman who challenges all she knows of the world and herself. Set against the exotic backdrop of Jerusalem's glistening white stones and ancient rituals, *Sotah* is a contemporary story of the struggle to reconcile tradition with freedom, and faith with love. From Publishers Weekly

Ragen's second novel (after *Jephte's Daughter*) revisits the insular world of ultrareligious Jews, focusing on the Reich family's three daughters and how they fare in the elemental rite of passage--marriage. In the Haredi community (made up of Jews who observe "the tiniest dictate of law" and have "boundless contempt" for all things secular), a matchmaker handles--and sometimes mishandles--nuptials based on dowry, piety and family ties, and only incidentally on love or compatibility. Harsh as these customs may seem, Ragen's detailed and thoughtful evocations of daily life in such an enclave offer insights into its members' beliefs. The drama centers on the Reichs' devout middle daughter, Dina, who tries to reconcile her desires and dreams within the confines of her narrow world. How she becomes a sotah (a woman suspected of adultery), her banishment from seeing her husband and young child, and the ultimate reconciliation of her strict faith with the meaningful aspects of a secular society form the heart of this very readable, but at times simplistic novel. Ragen is most successful when she tells the story from the vantage point of the haredi world, less so when her characters are secular Jews. A stronger work of fiction than *Jephte's Daughter*, the narrative holds the reader's attention throughout. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. Kirkus

Love-conquers-all genre takes on deep philosophical questions as Ragen (*Jephte's Daughter*, 1989) continues her exploration of orthodox Jewish life in this story of a woman accused of adultery--the sotah. The setting is the ultraorthodox milieu of Jerusalem, where the men study the Torah in yeshivas while their wives bear numerous children, clean and cook, and find outside work to supplement their meager incomes. Here, heroine Dina's struggle to be independent and still religiously observant provides the more profound concerns of a story that, despite its religious background, is basically your typically rosy fade-out into a technicolor sunset, with all problems--and they are not insubstantial--wrapped up in the last chapter. Dina Reich, the beautiful and dutiful daughter of Rabbi Reich and his remarkably energetic and saintly wife, yearns for love, for knowledge of a wider world than the narrow one she is confined to. A brief romance, ended because her family could not pay the requisite dowry, means that Dina must accept a husband chosen by the sect's matchmaker and approved by her parents. She marries good but painfully inarticulate Judah, a carpenter; bears a child; then, bored and lonely, begins a relationship with a more worldly neighbor. Though it's not consummated, religious vigilantes threaten her, and at their behest she flees to New York, where she works as a maid for a wonderful family, who, when she breaks down, do all they can to bring about the inevitable happy ending. Not only is Dina reunited with Judah, whose virtues she now appreciates, but she also finds a satisfactory compromise between the comforting security of religion and tradition and the more fulfilling aspects of sectarian life. Richness of faith and family lovingly evoked, with the other side--religious and cultural intolerance--equally given its due, but it all seems too easy. Philosophy lite. -- Copyright 1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.