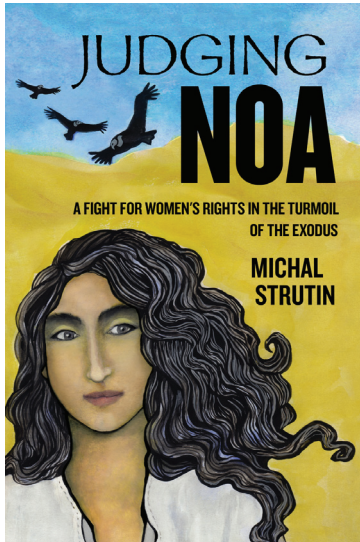




Judging Noa

by Michal Strutin

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Noa, at sixteen, sets out with the twelve tribes of the Exodus, dreaming of a life of freedom and the Promised Land that her father says will be theirs. When religious fanatics kill her father, Noa and her four sisters are in danger of being sold into bondage. Noa vows to win women's rights of inheritance to protect her sisters and herself. Pleading her case before ever-higher courts, Noa encounters a malicious judge and the dark side of power.

Gaining strength and complexity as she approaches the highest judge, Noa and her pursuit causes turmoil among the tribes: she is a notorious troublemaker, accused of witchery. And she is heroic. Based on a few biblical verses, Noa's life is set against the sweeping turbulence of the Exodus. Her quest for justice is a journey that has as much meaning today as it did then.

From the author

While living in Denver, I had joined a group organizing a program for a Jewish women's camp retreat when women were striving to reclaim their place in history. The program organizer, who became a friend, focused the program on the little-known biblical story of Zelophechad's daughters. Based on a few verses, five sisters pursued their right to inherit land so they would not be reduced to bondswomen. Women inheriting land was unheard of for most of history, affecting the lives and choices of women for centuries. Even today, many women around the world cannot inherit. Yet, the Bible tells of a stunning conclusion 3500 years old. I had to tell their story.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the Bible's editors included the story of Zelophechad's daughters?
2. What relevance does it have for life today?
3. What parallels—if any—do you see from then to now?
4. What is Noa's relationship to her friend Yoela.
5. How does Noa change over time?
6. What is Noa's relationship to her husband Hur, and how does it change over time.
7. Who do you think was the most compelling character in Judging Noa, and why? The second-most compelling character, and why?
8. How were their lives different from ours? How the same?
9. What interested you most in this tale?
10. What did you want to know more about?

**About the author**

Michal Strutin is an award-winning author of eight books on natural and cultural history, including *Places of Grace: the Natural Landscapes of the American Midwest*, *Discovering Natural Israel*, and two volumes of *Smithsonian Guides to Natural America*. Her articles on travel and natural and cultural history have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Tablet*, *Outside*, *Rolling Stone*, and other newspapers and magazines. In addition to spending time with her family, she enjoys traveling, anything outdoors, and gardening, especially California native plants.