2016

Ytreeide's "Ishtar’s odyssey: A family story for advent" (Book Review)

Lisa Fuller
Harding University

*The Christian Librarian* is the official publication of the Association of Christian Librarians (ACL). To learn more about ACL and its products and services please visit [http://www.acl.org/](http://www.acl.org/)

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl](http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl)

Part of the [Christianity Commons](http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl)

**Recommended Citation**

Fuller, Lisa (2016) "Ytreeide's "Ishtar's odyssey: A family story for advent" (Book Review)," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 59 : Iss. 2 , Article 42.

Available at: [http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl/vol59/iss2/42](http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl/vol59/iss2/42)

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *The Christian Librarian* by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact arolfe@georgefox.edu.

It comes as no surprise that two-time Olympic medalist, life coach, and certified counselor Mark Crear would be writing a book aimed at helping others achieve their goals. He writes that some components in an athlete’s training regimen may be used by non-athletes to achieve their personal and spiritual goals. Simplified, these components are purpose, preparation, passion, permission, prayer, and practice. Crear intersperses the practical elements of goal achievement with stories of his successes and failures. Yes, failures. *In the Zone* is not likely to give anyone false hope that achieving his or her goals will be easy, but the author includes plenty of encouragement that despite those obstacles, one will succeed.

What is most impressive about *In the Zone* is Crear’s clear focus on the goal achievement process, always reiterating that serving God should be foremost in any person’s mind. This is no prosperity gospel, and many of Crear’s suggestions strongly resemble classic spiritual disciplines. This book may be appropriate for institutions with a leisure nonfiction collection, or for those interested in a faith-based motivational book that has a less formulaic feel than many that can be found in the nearest Christian bookstore.

**Reviewer**
Amy C. Rice, Northwest Nazarene University


Christmas is a season of faith and family, but in the busyness of contemporary American life, parents often find it challenging to incorporate faith-based activities into a home life that is also filled with school and church events. In *Ishtar’s Odyssey*, Arnold Ytreeide provides an engaging story for parents to read to children as they introduce the concept and practices of observing Advent.

Children will find it easy to identify with the story’s central character, 10-year-old Ishtar. Although he is a prince from an ancient culture, he is a typical boy who longs to escape his studies and plots for ways to extend his bedtime. At the beginning of the story, Ishtar relishes his position as a prince whose days are filled with the luxuries of palace life. The idea of leaving his surroundings and being around commoners frightens him. However, when Ishtar discovers a new star during his
evening astronomy lessons, his father and uncles, who all serve as wise men to the king, decide that Ishtar must accompany them on a journey to follow the star and find the reason for its existence. Along the way, Ishtar is challenged with new ideas, new people, and new levels of understanding and compassion. There is one thing he cannot understand: the Hebrew concept of one God. How could there only be one God when all other cultures believe in the power of many gods?

Divided into daily readings for the weeks of Advent, each reading also includes a devotional thought. Homeschooling parents wishing to do additional research could add activities surrounding Middle East culture to create a unit study; a chart with suggested foods for each chapter is included in the introductory material. Families who enjoy following Ishtar on his journey may also wish to read the companion books, *Jotham’s Journey*, *Bartholomew’s Passage*, and *Tabitha’s Travels*. Along with its companions, *Ishtar’s Odyssey* would be a wonderful addition to family libraries, church libraries, and public libraries.

**Reviewer**
Lisa Fuller, Harding University

---


The title of this book may scare readers away, but it certainly is a topic that needs to be breached. Everything in western culture screams “life” but this book asks us to look at a subject that affects everyone. Because no one is guaranteed a certain amount of years to live, one needs to spend some time thinking of death. The frank, personal discussion of dying and death in the form of email exchanges serves as the style used for this topic. Irene Kacandes and Steve Gordon share the results of a no-holds-barred discussion they carried on for several years. Readers can consider a range of views on complicated personal and interpersonal issues to which there are no “right” answers. This is not a Christian/theological treatise on the topic, so those seeking scriptural answers to end-of-life issues will be disappointed in this book. Even the chapter on “what comes after I die” offered little consolation of what lies ahead for believers.

So is there a benefit in purchasing the book? I believe so. Even though the authors have both lost someone close to them, they still feel that there is much to learn about the mystery of the after-life. The authors talk about life with death asking if