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Gordon and Kacandes's "Let's talk about death: Asking questions that profoundly change the way we live and die" (Book Review)

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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

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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
dying is an injustice. Another chapter gives suggestions on how to handle pain at the end of life. There could be a whole book written on caregivers, but there is one chapter and some suggested resources for caregivers. Another book could be written on grief, but there is just a short chapter written. A Christian support group could take this book and develop a good, solid program adding Scripture. Personally, I believe the biggest value of the book lies with the appendices the authors provide. The resources they list are not exhaustive, but they are meant to give individuals and groups a place to begin and that often is the hardest part when dealing with a difficult subject.

For Christians, it would be helpful to read a book like One Minute After You Die: A Preview of Your Final Destination by Erwin Lutzer to get a biblical perspective of what happens when we die. You may have your own favorite book that deals with heaven and that is fine as long as you don’t take this book by Gordon and Kacandes as biblical truth.

Reviewer
Paul A. Roberts, Southeastern Bible College


William Dever’s purpose is to demonstrate by means of archeological artifacts as well as written records, among which is the Bible, what the daily life of Old Testament people was like. Dever is extremely well qualified to discuss ancient artifacts and their meaning and use; he has more than fifty years of archeological experience in his background. He directed archeological digs for Harvard and the University of Arizona in many sites in the Near East. His scholarly credentials are also outstanding. After more than 25 years as Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Arizona, he has been named Professor Emeritus of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies.

Dever has an engaging writing style. He immediately brings the reader into the discussion of the current dispute about what can be known about the ancient Israelites, or about any historical time, event, or people. He states his position on historical knowledge and moves on to examine the geography and climate of the land of the Israelites. He defines what he has termed towns and cities and relates that information to what we know as urban settings.