



The Debt of Tamar

Nicole Dweck

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A USA TODAY Best seller!

Bestselling author Nicole Dweck brings to life one of history's greatest yet overlooked stories of love and resilience.

In 2002, thirty-two-year-old Selim Osman, the last descendant of Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, flees Istanbul for New York. In a twist of fate he meets Hannah, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor and an artist striving to understand a father she barely knows. Unaware the connection they share goes back centuries, the two feel an immediate pull to one another. But as their story intertwines with that of their ancestors, the heroic but ultimately tragic decision that bound two families centuries ago ripples into the future, threatening to tear Hannah and Selim apart.

From a 16th-century harem to a seaside village in the Holy Land, from Nazi-occupied Paris to modern-day Manhattan, Nicole Dweck's The Debt of Tamar weaves a spellbinding tapestry of love, history, and fate that will enchant readers from the very first page.

The Debt of Tamar Details

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Author : Nicole Dweck

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From Reader Review The Debt of Tamar for online ebook

Pratikshya Mishra says

Loved the book!!!!

The story begins with a family Dona Antonia, Reyna and Jose-the Nisshim Dynasty- the revelation of their religion and their practicing it secretly. The successive events start with the Edict of Expulsion from Spain; leading to their successful escape from the hellhole, alive; the years in Istanbul, in the save haven of the Ottoman empire under the protection of Suleiman, the Magnificent and Osman Imperial dynasty; and the birth and life of Tamar in the harem and ‘the debt’.

The narration then moves to the present world, Turkey to the stories of Selim Osman, the last living descendant of the Osmans of Ottoman Empire, and Ayda. Part III tells the infamous tale of the Nazi rule and concentration camps through the life and fate of David Herzikova. Swiftly the chapters bring about the story of Hanna Herzikova and the ‘debt’ being paid back through her.

Nicole Dweck is a very competent writer. The tone of the entire novel is that of brooding and melancholy, though there are a few instances of happiness, family and fun. She chooses her sentences and phrases well. Not too lengthy not too short, just the right length able enough to convey the right messages. She writes in poetic prose, elevating the mood of the situation in just a few lines that are so profound in their meaning. Words like these impress me to no end. The story has four parts- plots from different ends of the world, faraway lands, and dynasties. It is not a fast paced novel, the action is slow, but reading one page can take you through a few days, hours or in some chapters, through years. Time leaps are there to cover the long story spanning generations. But it is also a factor that kept me engrossed throughout.

Read more thoughts and opinions on this book, here:

<http://pratikshya-magicmoments.blogspot.com>

Jenifer (JensCorner) says

The Debt of Tamar may be author Nicole Dweck's first novel, but you would never know it. She writes beautifully, lyrically. She tells a story that pulls you in from the beginning and keeps you glued. This talented author takes you to the corners of the world, spans centuries of time, and you are her willing companions every step of the journey. This amazing book is told in several parts, each being dedicated to an important character within the story.

I warn you, it's very difficult to do this book justice in a review. I don't want to give anything away, yet not give a good description of the story. I loved every single page of this book. In fact, I took 5 1/2 pages of notes while reading it. There is so much that happens between the book's covers. I didn't want to put it down.

The central theme of the book is how one act can alter the lives of so many. One decision changes the lives- present and future. What is done out of love and protection of someone you love can set into motion a chain reaction.

Jose's parents make a choice that impacts their son's life. When he has a daughter, he makes a devastating decision that impacts numerous lives and futures. Throughout the book you see this common thread within the characters. Each one's actions set in motion a chain reaction.

As I read Jose's story, I was all over the emotional map. The highs of his joys, and the lows of his heartbreak. His bravery was inspiring, and the pride he takes in his Jewish faith is remarkable. He's devastated when he sees a public execution of unrepentant Jews in Portugal, 1592 and it stays with him. He learns the truth of his own heritage, and doesn't look back.

The story takes a devastating turn when he sends his only daughter away so she can't marry the Sultan's son she's in love with. This is where you see the biggest chain reaction. From this decision, lives are affected for generations to come.

Nicole Dweck takes you all over the world, through centuries of time. You will become immersed in the Jewish culture, Turkish Sultan life, and more. You will become glued to the characters, and the story they unfold.

I apologize, this review doesn't begin to do the book justice. There is so much that happens within the book's 224 pages. It is a spellbinding read that you will not want to put down. You will see how one person's actions affect the world around them. Like me, you will be hooked and endure a journey of love, heartbreak, and strength.

Elyse Walters says

Reading "The Debt of Tamar", is a little like getting swallowed up by the plant in "Little shop of Horrors"? Just try to put this book down. Once you start it...
YOU CAN'T! YOU 'really' can't!

It's gut wrenching engrossing: An epic historical fiction-multilayered-passionate-intimate-
.....a juicy & lushy escapist novel.

I never knew where this story was going next.

First I sad - and angry that I had to confront my own personal pain about the history of so many Jews that had to hide their religion. I 'am' Jewish. It kinda makes me sick to have to continues to remember how mistreated Jewish people were...(and they were).

Can you image being 17 years old.. Raised as a Catholic, attending church every week, only to find out that you were Jewish? You think that might mess with your head, just a little?

It would me.

When 2 young teens - cousins- get news of 'the truth' ... that they are Jewish... life is never the same for them again. At one point I was thinking, I wouldn't have blame them, if they wished to never have found out the truth.

However... (they did).

Its clear that in order to survive ... JEWS MUST RUN...(escape plan set in action), and that's how it's done! Jews run!

The teens survive. The cousins escape Portugal, make it to Turkey.

Are you wondering what I am? Do these 'cousins' fall in love? YES, they do!

AS FOR WHAT HAPPENS, next, though - I'm not telling. I Had to wait and find out-- I was often 'dying' to know what was coming next.... So you can wait too. The author was ALWAYS steps ahead of me-- (the rascal)... She will be steps ahead of you too.

Don't even try to guess where the story is going- won't work anyway. So, enjoy the ride!

I haven't even come 'close' to sharing how much more is packed into this novel. Anyone who has loved Ken Follett's historical fiction books...(Pillars of the Earth-- World Without End, etc.), will love this book. Or Khaled Hosseini books... If you love his storytelling, you'll love Nocole Dweck. The great part is that she didn't have to write a 1,000 page book to include 5 generations - visit the Ottoman Empire- America & The Holy Land...

Nicole Dweck is my new Hero: she told a fabulous story, absolutely beautifully written, and 300 pages. Perfect length for a novel

Love this book... You will too!

*Suggestion: I believe this would make a wonderful 'gift' book. For you mom's aunts, good friends.

Thank you to St. Martin's Press, Netgalley, and my new 'hero'.... *Nicole Dweck*! (congrats on one terrific novel)

The Lit Bitch says

This novel takes the reader all over the world and through history....from a 16th-century harem to a seaside village in the Holy Land, from Nazi-occupied Paris, to modern-day Manhattan, readers will be captivated by the love, history, and fate happening throughout the story.

Everything nearly everything about this book I enjoyed! I loved the generational feel of the novel and the scope of time covered. I loved encountering many different people and tales that worked together to form a larger story if that makes sense. The characters are all memorable and well drawn. One of the things I liked best about this novel was how much the character's secrets impacted them and shaped their characters. Some times in novels some characters have secrets but the secrets don't 'define' who they are, but in this novel the opposite is true. The secrets that the characters carry with them have long reaching effects and in many cases define who they are. I thought this made the characters complex and intriguing in a different way that is not traditional.

This book was not a long one.....it easily could have been because of the extensive amounts of history it covers. That was one of the things that I thought might have helped this book. While the characters were well developed and interesting, there was so much 'story' and history to cover in such a short time that I felt like the book wanted to be longer. I think each character's 'journey' could have been so much more had the novel been allowed to be longer. It was almost like the author tried to condense the novel into a certain amount of

pages rather than letting the stories become fully realized.

But other than that, everything else in the novel worked well. The descriptions of the exotic locations were breathtaking! After reading this book I want to visit Istanbul so bad! It sounds so gorgeous! It takes a very talented writer to construct a story of this magnitude but Dweck does a marvelous job creating an interesting, unique story set in an exotic setting, and covering lots of major historical periods that are full of intrigue!

This is a great read if you are looking for something a little different and off the beaten track!

See my full review [here](#)

Amy says

What a beautiful book. The Debt of Tamar is more than a mere book, it is an experience. I loved every page. I would most definitely recommend to anyone who wants an escape...to another place and time. A veritable feast for the 5 senses. Wonderful!

Jenny Q says

3.5 Stars. I've read several books in recent years about the persecution and subsequent expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and all of them ended with the central Jewish characters leaving, though none said where they were going. So I was left wondering: Where did the Jews go when they were forced out of Spain? This book gave me an answer: the Ottoman Empire. Aha! This story begins with two young people whose privileged world is upended when they discover that the Christian lives they've been living do not reflect their true heritage. But embracing their secret Jewish ancestry and faith places them in danger as the inquisition sweeps through, and they are forced to flee to Istanbul, where they find shelter under Suleiman the Magnificent's rule. The couple's daughter, Tamar, is raised and educated among the Sultan's harem, where she forms a close friendship with Suleiman's grandson, Murat, that blossoms into love. But just as Murat is coming into manhood and preparing to step into his role as the next ruler of the Ottoman Empire, with his beloved Tamar at his side, Tamar disappears. Devastated and unaccepting, Murat consults a seer who tells him that he and Tamar are destined to be together again, and thus Murat devotes much of his life to finding his lost love, and going a bit mad in the process, giving rise to whispers of a Sultan's Curse that will plague generations of his descendants. The rest of the story follows various descendants of both Murat and Tamar as their souls search for each other throughout the ages.

I took me a while to warm up to *The Debt of Tamar*--about 200 pages, actually--and the reason for that is the writing style. It's a fast-moving story that does not leave much room for character development until the present-day storyline nears its conclusion. The quick pace doesn't leave a lot of room for in-depth story exploration either. Because it's a sweeping saga spanning multiple families and generations, I found it hard to develop a real emotional connection with most of the characters. Just when I felt like I was getting to know one of them, their part in the story was over and it was time to move on to the next character. And I felt like not enough time was spent on Tamar and Murat for me to feel the soul-deep connection that would give rise to the Sultan's Curse and guide the destinies of generations of their descendants. Nor could I figure out how some of the later characters were related to them. So I just tried to sweep those questions to the back of my mind and enjoy the story for what it was.

While I did feel that the writing lacked the sophistication and depth I've come to expect from historical fiction, Ms. Dweck did leave room in her prose for some fantastic, haunting imagery, poignant observations and social commentary, and mouth-watering description. I loved how the story wove together threads of the Jews under the Spanish Inquisition and under the Nazi regime, highlighting some similarities I had not fully recognized myself until now. I was totally enthralled as events and people finally came together in the present day, and the story did not pan out at all like I thought it would, so big props for unpredictability, but I can't say I was pleased with the outcome. I felt kind of cheated, like I didn't get to see the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy. Though I did shed a tear. I know! This book is a jumble of contrasting feelings for me--things I loved and things I didn't, elements that worked beautifully and some that didn't seem to work at all, characters whose motivations I couldn't understand and some whose motivations I understood all too well. There's definitely never a dull moment, and it takes the reader on a wild ride from Spain to the Sultan's palace and his harem to Paris under Nazi occupation to Palestine and present-day Istanbul and New York, with threads of the past and the Sultan's Curse woven throughout.

The Debt of Tamar is something different, something that may introduce readers to some history they haven't encountered yet, and something that may spark deeper thinking. I think this is the kind of book that will be a different experience for every reader. With so many characters and events and things to ponder, no two readers will walk away with the same thoughts and reflections. I like books like that.

Sheree says

It was the cover of *The Debt of Tamar* that caught my attention. Isn't it beautiful? Thankfully it doesn't end with the cover, this debut novel is also beautifully written. It's a story of love and loss, redemption, culture and faith.

Spanning centuries; from 16th century Portugal and the Ottoman Empire, to Nazi occupied Paris in the 1940's and present day Turkey and US. I've read quite a bit about The Edict of Expulsion of Jews from Spain and Portugal and find this period in history both horrifying and fascinating.

Beginning with the execution by burning of unrepentant Jews, Doña Antonia Nissim, her daughter Reyna and nephew Jose escape to Turkey with the help of Sultan Sulieman the Magnificent. When Reyna and Jose's daughter Tamar falls in love with the sultan's son, Murat, a decision by Jose sparks the debt, and so begins The Sultan's Curse. This part of the story I was most captivated by, I didn't want to leave.

Fast forward to present day and we follow Selim Osman, last living descendant of the Ottoman Sultans, then to Paris 1941 and the Herzikovas ... sounds confusing but as the story progresses common threads are slowly revealed and the tapestry is pieced together.

The Debt of Tamar has a haunting beauty, it's quite outside the realm of traditional, continuing the central love story of Tamar and Murat through other characters ... thwarted love, eternal love, beautifully entwined.

I understand why Nicole Dweck presented *Debt of Tamar* in such a way, but it didn't stop me wanting more. The characters felt elusive, fleeting, just a sense of them before they slip into the shadows. It's a story you need to be fully present for as confusion can easily override pleasure ... but maybe that was just me.

All up, a story I'm glad I had the opportunity to read and I look forward to more from Nicole Dweck.

Erin says

Some of the best books I've ever read seem to happen in two particular locations...on any mode of public transportation and in the bathtub. "The Debt of Tamar" enfolded me in a cocoon of love and destiny that took me from the Ottoman Empire to Nazi occupied France to a fishing boat in Israel to a hospital room in the United States all connected by the fate of two young lovers and a curse. Abandon the rational that will scoff "Oh, this is so unrealistic!" and give into the wistful heart that says "Yes!!! love is all around!"

Erin Al-Mehairi says

The *Debt of Tamar*, by Nicole Dweck, was a completely beautiful and emotional journey. I quickly became lost in the story and was taken through a gamut of emotions as I read this gorgeous novel. Set initially in the 16th Century, a Jewish family is taken under the wing of the family and harem of the Turkish Sultan. This sets the foundation for the novel, as the Jewish child and the son of the Sultan, a future Sultan, play and grow up together and eventually form a bond. This section read like a tale from the 1001 Arabian Nights, though it was rich with real history as well. It touched the five senses through words and left me enveloped and engaged, so much so that I couldn't put the book down. I stayed up all night reading this book until I collapsed crying and spent from the emotional impact of the story.

Dweck's novel is her debut, but she writes like a seasoned writer. Of course, she is a writer in degree and work as well. But it's hard to cross over to fiction all the same and Dweck does it with amazing storytelling ability. As she intertwines the lives of the descendants of both lineages down through the decades, she writes with such purpose and with such seamless accuracy that I was never lost. Not only did I always feel connected to the story and the characters, no matter which religion or country the character was from of living in, but I also felt connected to a theory of fantastical nature that is our fates align with others and are destined, that people are put into our paths, that life takes on history's mysteries and unresolved turmoils in order to be remembered or to fix.

And I love stories of the Middle East, the history, the intertwining of faiths. She shows us how the cultures, countries, and faiths changed with each century, decade, and major historical time markers like WWII to the modern age. I was especially grateful, as a Christian, in her showing how for those who are Jewish it's a calling, a destiny to follow and yet how for Muslims in history have been humanitarians and hold a strong bond to their faith as well. In many ways this book shows that love, whether a mothers, a brothers, or a romantic interest, knows no bounds of faith, culture, time, position, or tradition.

I never give any spoilers, but Dweck's gentle wordswomanship in relation to dying and death, to redemption and faith, to restoration of the soul is outstanding. This book is one that will be a lasting memory for me and I hope to read much more from Dweck in the future. It wasn't just reading a book, it was an experience.

*I was sent a copy of this book in return for an honest opinion.

Kelly Massry says

From Portugal to Istanbul, to Nazi-occupied Paris and newly-established Israel, this is a sweeping saga of a novel.

Inspired by the lives of Dona Gracia Nasi and her son, Josef, the book begins there – with the secret Jews and fleeing refugees of the 16th century – but then opens up, layer upon layer to unite both the Jewish and Muslim cultures. Dweck does this deftly, reeling us in and then pulling back, so that we watch the players in this drama interact up close and from afar. The result is a parallelism of sorts: A Jewish girl forbiddenly clashes against a Muslim prince and their love has ripple effects – careening, spiraling, never stopping until centuries later it finally reaches a long-awaited conclusion.

And yet, that conclusion is a long time coming and is not easily achieved. At first, Dweck seems to strike this inter-ethnic relationship at its base, putting an end to it as the decorum of the time dictated. But then we see – and perhaps this is the power of true love exerting its force – that their love knows no bounds and in fact will seep through every crevice, every descendent, every far-flung circumstance, until it has touched the people it was meant to touch and found the closure it sought.

It is not just love that needs to find a resting place in this novel, but also the characters themselves. So many of them suffer a crisis of identity, burdened by secrets they suspect but can't unearth. Dweck's characters are hapless souls – none of them know who they are. And here in lies another poignant element of the tapestry the author has sewn: in their search, the characters encounter each other. And when they meet, the past becomes a little clearer, the journey easier to bear.

Traditionally Orthodox Jews and devout Muslims are sworn away from one another. But in Dweck's historical novel the divide vanishes and we see just humanity in its place. Simply men, simply women – all embarking on coming of age tales that will bring them home and enable them, finally, to know themselves.

Dweck's novel is dizzyingly good. You will get swept up in it, meaning to read a couple of chapters and instead reading for hours. But it will demand your full attention; you must be wholly present. Dweck is a true writer who takes precision and care with each sentence. Adjectives are both carefully chosen and freely strewn so that you will be awash in images, similes and description at every turn. As a critic, I wrestled with this aspect of it. Instinctually, I felt the prose to be overwritten – but then again, it wasn't badly written – in fact, it was magnificently done. So, what should I make of it, then? Maybe this: that Dweck has a whole palette of words at her disposal and she's chosen to use them all, because she can.

Reading this, you will savor the language and the countless surprising ways the author has chosen to use it. Or maybe you'll just forget about language entirely and simply race through the book to see what happens. I found myself so torn – one moment wanting to stop and marvel at a turn of phrase and the next wanting to skim a passage of description so as to get to the next juicy part. Dweck will play with you like this, in the most delicious of ways – with pacing first slow and then fast – ultimately crescendoing to a satisfying end.

This novel can be purchased on Amazon.com Enjoy!

~Kelly Massry
www.readlately.com

Casee Marie says

In the late 16th century, a band of Portuguese Jews sought refuge in Turkey under the protection of Suleiman the Magnificent, the most celebrated Sultan in the Ottoman Empire. Among those escaping persecution were noble widow Doña Antonia Nissim, her daughter Reyna, and her nephew Jose. Faced with the truth of their Jewish heritage for the first time in their lives, Reyna and Jose connect with each other and find love and comfort in Turkey. Years later, their daughter Tamar falls in love with the Sultan's son, Murat; the two vow to spend the rest of their lives together despite the oppositions of their families and the obstacles of classism and religion that stand in their way. They remain committed to their shared determination until the tensions escalate between their families and Tamar vanishes. Mad with devastation, Murat assumes his role in the Ottoman Empire and sparks what will become known as The Sultan's Curse, a plague that affects his every descendant. Fast-forward to present-day Turkey and Selim Osman, a wildly successful real estate magnate and the grandson of the last Osman Sultan. In the prime of his life, Selim has the world at his feet until fate deals him a cruel blow: a shocking and life-altering diagnosis. Abandoning his life in Turkey, Selim turns to a Manhattan hospital in the hope of a cure; here he meets Hannah, a spirited young painter whose father is fighting a medical battle of his own. As Selim and Hannah start to understand the depth of their connection they'll rejoin a love once lost and finally bring two fates together after decades of dormant solitude.

A lush novel spanning generations and eras, *The Debt of Tamar* is ambitious and beautiful crafted by debut author Nicole Dweck. Its story is a fascinating one, spun with originality by the author in a fearless departure from the typical structure of a novel. There's a noticeable artistry to the way Dweck uses a full cast – five generations' worth of active characters – to tell the story of one love and one destiny. What could be expected to be a frustratingly complex tale becomes a genuinely accessible novel, one that balances names, dates, and histories all with a surprising and pleasing lightness. Dweck knows exactly how long to focus on a generation of characters before moving us on to the next, understanding very well how her reader will process all this information, all these emotions and experiences. Lingering purposefully on Tamar and Murat, the novel's central love story is palpable, but it's where Dweck goes next that will truly surprise and engross her reader.

There's nothing predictable about *The Debt of Tamar*, which is a statement that takes on new meaning as soon as the reader finishes its final pages: often a book ends one way or another, happy or sad. I was mesmerized by the way Dweck approached Happily Ever After as something woven in the invisible power of fate, something that transcends human emotion and even the human lifespan. Her efforts awaken the reader to a mystical idea of the true eternity of love and its ability to triumph even after its lovers are gone. Beyond the enchantment of her story, Dweck proves herself a capable and truly talented writer, piecing together luminous moments of prose that will blossom under her audience's eyes. Her writing, particularly in the contemporary portion of the novel, offers a gently poetic touch that caused me to stop and remark on the way words, though perfectly natural apart, can create something special together. I suppose that in itself is a reflection on her depiction of the legacy of Tamar and Murat: existing apart, but together in love.

(Review © Casee Marie, originally published on May 14, 2013 at LiteraryInklings.com. I received a copy of the book for the purpose of review.)

Angela M says

Two boys , born centuries and places far apart share a common legacy , raised as Catholics as their Jewish families send them away to save them from the persecution of the Inquisition and later from Nazis in France . A Sultan's son and a young Jewish girl fall in love. A woman risks her life to save her people. This is a beautiful story crossing countries , continents and cultures and moving across centuries . It's horrific at times when the persecution of Jews at various times in history , the Inquisition, the Nazi invasion in France are depicted in the lives of these characters and heartbreaking when characters who love each other are separated. But it is also uplifting when they find out who they are and carry the legacy and faith that their parents died for , with them from that point forward .

I was taken by the story right from the beginning. I was aware that this was a story linking the past and the present and I've come to really enjoy these as long as the connections work and such was the case here . Spanning from the mid 16th century to 2006 , the past and present are linked by love stories which are the heart of the novel . What I was not aware of until I read the author's notes was that the book is that the author Nicole Dweck's heritage is that of Iberian Jewish/Middle Eastern or that one of the beloved characters in this story is based on the real life hero , Dona Gracia Nasi, who saved many Jews from the Inquisition .

Considering that this is not a lengthy book, it's pretty amazing how much time and how many places and how many characters are covered here and that these lives are woven together . It's almost impossible to try to condense the story here and I won't even try. I can say , though that in this short novel you will be transported across these places and times and the transition and connection work beautifully.

Thanks to St. Martin's Press and NetGalley.

Margitte says

I'm not even going to pretend to be nice. Don't bother to read this editorial rant if you do not appreciate any other opinion but the don't worry-be-happy mantra. I'm actually a very nice person, even if I try not to be. But sometimes....you know....the fuse just had it.

Bite me, chew me, spit me out. Ignore me, and try the book. Read other reviews and save yourself from my blabber, my pen puke, my verbal diarrhea.

This book, with its puffed up inside cover blurb should never, ever be mentioned in the same sentence as Khaled Hosseini, Sau Friedlander, Tadeusz Borowski,Leni Yahil, Paul Celan, Elie Wiesel, Primo Levi, Markus Zusak, John Boyne, Leon Uris, Ay?e Kulin, Elif Shafak, Orhan Pamuk, Sebahattin Ali, Inaam Kachachi, Samar Yazbek, Michelle Moran, Sandra Gulland, Sena Jeter Naslund, Catharine Delors, and a line-around-the-earth more authors of the same excellence.

These mentioned authors above have one thing in common: transforming reality into poetry of words, elevating it to a plane of harmony of history and the permanence of excellent writing. They are all masters of historical fiction or non-fictional historical narratives. Their style of writing is still associated with authentic writing about the Holocaust, for one, but also other historical events in places such as Istanbul, Paris, Middle-East, Israel, Europe, et al. That style renounces beauty and cleverness in the name of more sustaining values like humility and truth.

Another common aspect of their writing is that the events were not just literary subjects, but actually the central truth of their lives. There is a stylistic virtuosity to their work. The detail in their narratives came

from memory and not from fast-grabbed details out of encyclopedias. They will never be accused of using Auschwitz as a tool for shock value, or for gross sentimentality, or for false gravitas. This can be a result of bad faith, or deliberate exploitation of the subject or both. Their intention was never to write redeeming human-interest stories.

I named just a few, but as mentioned before there are thousands of writers who could have told this saga better. It is the authenticity or the lack thereof, in this 300 page-novel that got the pressure going on my fuse.

BUT....BUT...BUT!!!! the author has huge potential if the emotional exploitation to hit the pop-lit market can be avoided, the story expanded with more character development and pages added to introduce more texture in background and prose. Color played a major role in this text to express emotions and setting. Hues of blues, purple and pink. It was good, but not enough. The narrative was too fast-paced and often superficial to conclude a long history in 300 pages.

I did not want to read a pop-fiction version of history. I am not guilty of literary ADHD; I don't easily get emotionally destroyed by reality. You don't have to keep me mentally stable, or prevent my gentle soul to be polluted. Or change the horrors of the Holocaust into a kind of moral tourism, a mental excursion, to save me from bad karma. I can take it. All of it. In one go. That's why I can and want to read real historical fiction. And it is the reason why I thought this book might be a perfect read. Obviously it was not. Not exactly.

Don't bombard me with modern expressions such as:

"her cover's been blown" (mmmm....was that applicable to the author, I wonder).
Really!? In 1542 !?

Or what about this eloquent modern American dialogue in centuries past:

"I don't care about any of it. I just don't want to lose my best friend."

**

"He was a perfect gentleman."

"Perfectly dimwitted."

"I thought he was handsome."

"Uglier than a monkey's rear!"

"Lower your voice."

**

"Just a skinny little thing"

**

"A dirty shoe kicked her in the gut"

**

"I figured as much."

**

"You'll both pack a small bag. Only essentials. Whatever you may need for a short journey."

And what was the idea with the term G-d. (You must read the book to understand the meaning, or non-meaning of G-d.)

In 1564, when this saga starts out with the wealthy Portuguese matriarch Doña Antonia (Nissim) and her two children, her biological daughter, Reyna, and her adopted nephew, Jose, modern American colloquialism was still a faraway pipe dream, darling. This narrative style prevented me from getting into this book almost

until the very end, to be honest.

The saga centers around the Jewish religion. It's history, it's sorrows and 'sadnesses'. The ambitious plot builds the outcome of the Jewish people in 300 pages. As you can imagine, it resulted in an informative summary of a very old story.

José who happily functioned as a Christian until he was seventeen years old, realized that the Jewish religion chose him and that his parents would rather die than convert to Christianity, leaving him orphaned. The book started out with him regarding himself as the happiest orphan alive. (does that sound sixteenth century narrative at all?)

Then he spends his time finding the reason for people to die for this religion.

Soon he was delving into metaphysics and once again, astronomy, through the mystical teachings of the Zohar. Never before had his mind operated on so many different planes simultaneously. It was as if Kabbalah was a language stored in his memory before birth and the process of learning was merely an exercise in recollection.

Be patient. This is important. Functioning as Christians for many years, but being Jewish in disguise, did not have them break out in hives, grew them Vampirian molars, or had them hunch-backed and buckle-legged as a result. They actually survived nicely, until the ruling regime got interested in the widow's wealth, during the Edict of Expulsion, and they all had to flee for their lives, with the support of the Jewish Underground Movement. They ended up at the mercy of the Ottoman Sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent (his name derived from the wise Solomon in the Bible) who believed in religious tolerance. Istanbul in Turkey was their destiny.

And so they lived happily ever after, until Tamar, the offspring of Jose and Reyna, fell in love with Murat, the Sultan's grandson, and suddenly the religious intolerance came into play. Not from the Sultan's side, but from the Jewish Jose Nissam. The religion who left him orphaned and living as a Christian for 17 years. The religion now prevented him from accepting his daughter's choices. A fate probably worse than death.

Jose had no trouble to be Christian until he was told his true heritage. He had no trouble with being the guest of the Muslim Sultan either. But the possibility of an inter-faith marriage had him at the brink of well....yes...read the book to see what I mean.

Then Tamar disappears, and oh dear, Murat the young Sultan is heartbroken. Hence the curse that will follow this family to the ends of...well a modern life in Manhattan, New York and Connecticut.

Was there a fulfillment of the prophecy? Honest to G-d, it remained a mystery to me. The story line and plot follow the basic template of modern romances. People fall in love, passion blooms, then something happens and the dramatic ending looms. In this case, another century or two invades the narrative to add historical fictional elements to the final conclusion.

The saga spans over several centuries, different geographical zones, through a cultural miasma, dropping in at the Holocaust, Paris, Israel, Tiberia, a cottage overlooking the sea of Galilee, and at last a modern day New York.

It is a love story with a mystery. All done in 300 lightning-fast pages of plot. Historical informative, yes. The show-don't-tell principle flew out the window as a result. Sad.

The Jewish history summarized as I said. A shock-value-added grab at the inhumane atrocities of the Jewish fate and the Holocaust, with a lighter hue of rose than the normal, yet still digestible if you don't indulge in true historical fiction and reality too much. A gentle rendition of history. For instance, Bulgarians, who started the first successful uprising against the 500-year Ottoman regime, might write a totally different version of the Ottoman history. If it made people so happy, why overthrow it?

If Jewish Don José Nissem authored this book, this tale would have had a really different take on his life and legacy. The story would have been a much more realistic version of events, truer to the historical fiction spirit of Jewish authors. Turkey and Bulgaria, for instance, became safe havens for Jews during WWII.

A magnificent book to read in this regards is *The Last Train to Istanbul* by Ayşe Kulin. This book is a serious rendition of the rescue effort of Turkish Jews from Paris, and the conflict of an inter-faith marriage between A Jewish young man and a Muslim young woman. It's quite an antidote to *The Debt of Tamar* in style, narrative and authenticity. (My review: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>)

So yes, Tamar's story is light, it's love, it's supposedly historical fiction in the don't-worry-be-happy and emotional-baiting styles. A different kind of historical fiction. Some people cried, experienced it as an emotional roller coaster. Good for them. I told you to read this book and decide for yourself. It is also a tragedy. A really sad story.

If you're still here, thank you. So we're still friends, right? My sad conclusion is that religion can really destroy or enrich people's lives. It does not change people physically, it changes their destiny. It will destroy mankind if we refuse to adapt and respect one another.

I actually enjoyed the last part of the book. The ENDING.....SUPERB!!!!!! Punched right out of the romance zone, although the book is about love, destiny, loyalty and so on. Very well articulated and eloquently focused on excellent word smithery. Well-done. So, a three star rating says it was okay. One was for the Jewish history. The book has merit and will be a blast for the right reader. It calls out for a very different audience. Great author.

Thanks for reading. Sorry about my rant. I adore Starbucks coffee, it elevates me to the clouds, but when I can enjoy it straight from the tree, I'm dancing on the moon!

Sela.

Erin says

Find this and other reviews at: <http://flashlightcommentary.blogspot....>

My name is Erin Davies and I am a cover slut. I see an attractive jacket and any and all impulse control goes straight out the window. Half the time I throw caution to the wind and don't even read the description... okay more than half the time, but it's my lie, I'll tell it the way I want.

Now I know I should be ashamed at the shallowness of my selection process, but the truth is I'm not. It isn't a finite rule or anything, but quality jackets generally grace quality content. More importantly though, this tendency leads me to sample a lot of titles I would've otherwise passed without a second thought. Titles that turned out to be well-worth my time. Titles like Nicole Dweck's *The Debt of Tamar*.

A nontraditional and abstract romance, Dweck's is a beautifully poignant tale of love, loss, and redemption that touches multiple generations over more than five hundred years. Boasting a wide array of characters, I greatly appreciated the contrast Dweck created among the various protagonists and found much to admire in the philosophical complexities of their collective story.

Unfortunately for me, I found one of the novel's greatest strengths was also a significant frustration. I very much liked Dona Antonia Nissim and would have loved to spend hours in her company, but the shifting focus of the narrative quashed that desire almost as soon as it was born. This happened again and again, with Jose, Reyna, Tamar, Murat, Davide, Edward, Selim, Ayda and Hannah. There is an ethereal beauty in the interconnected tapestry of their lives, but I'm a selfish reader and felt somewhat cheated by the brevity of time I was allowed to spend with each of Dweck's brilliantly imagined cast. I understand the nature of this story is not conducive to such treatment, but I genuinely feel their personal journeys have potential beyond that depicted within these pages.

My petty grievances aside, I found *The Debt of Tamar* a beautiful story that transcends traditional boundaries with timeless themes and evocative prose. A truly captivating debut that holds much promise for its author.

Joyce says

Like a butterfly landing on a flower, savoring the nectar, then quickly moving on to the next flower was how this book seemed to me. It had me intrigued from the get go and I couldn't put it down. And then it changed to a different time period, and location and characters, which I wasn't ready for. And then it happened again. Still, I was engrossed and finally the thread wound its way through. Ah ha.....

There were a couple of good lines, that if I don't note them here, most likely they'll get lost. "He almost turned back because the person on that dock was almost who he was, almost who he needed to be, but in his heart, he knew that when you were searching for your soul, almost didn't count."

Another: "All the universe is whirling. The moon is whirling around the earth. Our earth is whirling on its axis, forever around the sun. Other worlds, the constellations. The clouds in the sky and the stars in the farthest galaxies. We are not careening aimlessly through the universe. These men whirl because they are one with the universe."

I found this book to be an entertaining and an easy, fast read.
