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Title: The Patriarchs: Sometimes The Stars Sometimes The Sand

Author: Dr. Stephen Harrison and Richard Huizinga

Publisher: Book Vine Press

ISBN: TBA

Genre: Religious

Pages: 130

Reviewed by: Carl Conrad

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In the book *The Patriarchs: Sometimes The Stars Sometimes The Sand*, by Dr. Stephen Harrison and Richard Huizinga, the reader is plunged into the biblical histories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph to learn how these cultural progenitors of Israel contributed to the creation of a nation. Although this is not a mere recantation of events and incidences which occurred in their lives, it is more of an explanation of the literal meaning, as well as the symbolic significance, of many of these important occurrences.

For instance, the authors make great use of the metaphors that are used as instructive tools in many different incidents, noting that God uses his first metaphor when he instructs Abraham to walk before God and be blameless and that the result will be his offspring would be “like the dust of the earth so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted” and later that your descendants “will be as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.” The act of circumcision then becomes the ultimate metaphorical representation for having what the authors call “skin in the game” as they say it means that it is the link between literalism and figurative explanations. It is seen as the link between man’s interventions of promoting God’s pledges and the actual pledge by God.

Another very interesting analysis occurs in Chapter #6, when the authors discuss “God Appearances.” Looking carefully at the times in which God appears and interacts with various biblical figures (Eve, Abraham, and Hagar in particular) as they show how God uses flawed characters to represent us all, sometimes called “God’s misfits.” In this book, the authors discuss such issue-oriented topics as: tithing; Abraham being asked to sacrifice his son; Sodom and Gomorrah; Isaac’s birth; Jacob’s wives; Jacob’s encounters with God; Joseph and dreams; Jesus and Joseph; and God appearances, with a Final Word and Patriarch questions for self-testing.

This is a very detailed and figurative book which will prompt many discussions about biblical passages and their meanings. But if you are the type of reader who likes to find new interpretations of old writing, you will be thrilled by some of the discussions of these two authors who, as they say, “enjoy reflecting and meditating on biblical stories, discussing them in small-town restaurants and then writing about them in a way that will draw believers back to the original stories to uncover the new meaning.”

The Patriarchs is an excellent book to prompt conversations and discussions for anyone interested in the Bible.