



## Tessa Afshar

Tessa Afshar is biblical and historical fiction award-winning American author who has made a name for herself in the Christian genre. Tessa was born in Iran and spent most of her childhood there, before she moved to England aged fourteen. In England, she went to a boarding school, which is where she was introduced to and fell in love with the likes of Charlotte Bronte and Jane Austen. She converted to Christianity while she was in her twenties, which had a profound effect on her life. She migrated to the United States where she went to College at Yale, graduating with an MDiv. In addition to taking a theological course at Yale, she was the Divinity School's co- chair of the Christian Fellowship. He currently serves on the board of one of the oldest American churches in the US, though she is yet to lose her love for chocolates. Afshar wrote her first novel "Pearl in the Sand" in 2010, before she followed it up with "Harvest of Rubies", the first of the Harvest series in 2012. Over the years, she has won several awards including an Inspy award for "Land of Silence," that was also the winner of the 2016 top five Christian Fiction novels. The novel also made the shortlist for the Best Inspirational Romance at the 2016 RT Reviewers Choice Awards. Afshar won the Best Historical Romance Christy Award for the novel Harvest of Gold, and made the finals for the Best Fiction title at the 2013 ECPA Book Awards for "Harvest of Rubies." "Pearl in the Sand" was the winner of the New Author of the Year Award in the 2011 Readers Choice Awards.

Tessa Afshar's writing has been significantly influenced by her experiences growing up in Iran, England, and the United States. After her parent's divorce, she found herself in a different culture in England, having lived in a nominal Muslim community back home in Iran. She had a vague belief in God, but attending a Christian boarding school in England exposed her to a different type of religion and concept of God. While the school required everyone to attend church, what they did while in church was not too restricted. In fact, many foreign students were free to read their books of faith on the balcony. For Tessa who could only read Persian or English and not the Arabic of the Qur'an, romance novels were her only refuge. Even though she never knew it at the time, the reading she did during those Sunday services would give her the foundation for her later writing career. When she converted to Christianity, she began

writing Christian novels that were a retelling of some of the most popular of bible stories. Her freestanding novels and series tell the stories of the matriarchs and patriarchs of the bible, which have delighted Christian fiction fans all over the globe. In addition to her writing, she also engages in prayer and speaking ministries, which have helped develop relationships with her fans beyond the novels. Afshar's novels are not romantic novels per se, as she has asserted that the romance novel is more superficial as opposed to her works. The main theme of her novels is the concept that the human heart that has been twisted, bent, and broken can still be made whole. She writes novels to assert that everyone is precious and worthy of love, loyalty, joy and honor. Given the uniqueness of each member of humanity, the underlying message is that each life has a firm purpose and that the creator intended for it. The author writes about the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of characters in the bible to portray the original design of God for every person as an unshakable truth. Through the novels' stories and characters, the writer tells of the love that God has for humanity. His unfailing love will always renew life, forgive failure, restore, and heal hearts that have strayed from the true path. Afshar's novels are written in the tradition of old movies such as Quo Vadis and Ben-Hur that incorporated biblical stories to entertain, uplift, and encourage. The novels incorporate companions and friends that bring tears, and laughter that raise the spirits of fellow travelers on life's journey. The lives of characters such as Nehemiah, Sarah, Rahab, Ruth, and Elianna who share their victories, fears, isolation, insecurities, and hopes is a refreshing take on the Christian narratives that many Christians have grown up reading.

"Harvest of Rubies" the first novel in the Harvest series of novels is a meticulously crafted novel with a riveting plot and one of the most intriguing of heroines. The novel is set in 5th century Persia, and follows the life and times of Sarah, the prophet Nehemiah's cousin. Sarah is looking to win the approval and attention of her father and hence secretly learns how to write and read, something that women in her society were not allowed to do. When her cousin learns that she has been secretly studying, he encourages her and it is not long before Sarah is a gifted scribe with knowledge of multiple languages of the Kingdom. The queen of Persia learns of her gift and invites her to court to become her scribe. Just when she is achieving what she never thought she could ever achieve, she discovers a plot against the King's mother, and reports it to the Queen. She thought she was doing a good thing but is now saddled with the prospect of marriage to Darius, a wealthy Persian aristocrat as a reward for her information. Their marriage begins in scorn and scandal, and Sarah soon learns that she will find her true worth in the most unexpected of places.

"Harvest of Gold" is the fascinating sequel to "Harvest of Rubies". After her marriage to Darius, Sarah often feels like her marriage was to the Persian aristocracy. But even as she never liked the idea of marrying the Persian, she has grown to love Darius. She now has power, honor, property, and wealth, but not her husband's love.

Even though Darius is half-Jewish through his mother, he has never reconciled himself to having a Jewish wife. Moreover, Sarah makes the situation worse when she conspires with Nehemiah to have the king order the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The king orders Darius and his wife to oversee the project and now they have to journey across thousands of miles of conflict, danger, and surprising memories. Nonetheless, dangerous and distasteful as the journey is, Darius at last sees the importance of letting God into his marriage and life, which leads him into a life of much success and bounty.