



The Doorposts of Your House and on Your Gates

Jacob Bacharach

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Is there any father worse than Abraham?

Are there any unhappier families than the first family of Genesis?

In the follow-up to his *The Bend of the World*, Jacob Bacharach enlivens these existential questions in a tale that replaces the biblical Ur with New York City, the land of Canaan with the rust-belt river valleys of western Pennsylvania.

Fleeing from a failed relationship, Isabel Giordani leaves Manhattan for Pittsburgh to accept a job at the underachieving nonprofit Future Cities Institute and insinuates herself into the aimless lives of Isaac Mayer and his father, Abbie. An architect turned crooked real estate developer, Abbie claims to be chasing after an unexpected heavenly vision—one that inevitably embroils the Mayer family within the political and familial machinations of Fayette County, Pennsylvania.

The Doorposts of Your House and on Your Gates Details

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Author : Jacob Bacharach

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From Reader Review *The Doorposts of Your House and on Your Gates* for online ebook

Jo Dervan says

Abbie Mayer was an architect who had a lucrative consulting and speaking business. He and his wife, Sarah, lived comfortably in NYC until Sarah discovered that his girlfriend was pregnant. In an effort to repair the marriage, Abbie and Sarah move to Pittsburg near where his sister, Veronica lives. Abbie gets into the construction business and is soon working with shady characters on corrupt deals.

About 30 years later Isabael Giordani, reeling from a failed relationship, also moves out to that area and looks up Abbie, someone who she has researched for years. She becomes friendly with Abbie's son, Issac, Veronica and eventually Abbie and Sarah.

Both Sarah and Abbie have secrets that are exposed in this tale of a dysfunctional family.

Cecil Paddywagon says

Author read Franzen's *Twenty-Seventh City* and, instead of recoiling like a normal person, was like, "I, too, want to combine the essential joylessnesses of real estate development and local politics and put it into a novel."

All brains, no heart. Meh

Robby says

A humane, witty and sad retelling of the story of Abraham, set in modern times, involving real estate scams and fracking in Pittsburgh and the surrounding areas.

Rachel says

"On the Doorposts of Your House and on Your Gates" is a strange, wonderful, discursive beast of a novel. The book is populated by New York Jews (gay and straight) and Pennsylvania thugs (mostly straight) and touches on spirituality, land deals, architecture, hipsters, Pittsburgh culture, alcoholism and drugs. The book is too long and far too weird, but somehow it also totally works.

Note: I read an advance review copy for free via NetGalley.

Matthew Gallaway says

This book uses real-estate development and small-town corruption to explore -- in ways that are both dramatic and funny (or both) -- the complexity of family relationships and the often inexplicable and possibly mystical forces that lead people to act the way we do. If you're from or familiar with the geography of Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia, this book will have extra appeal, as the landscape and place-names serve as the unspeaking character that binds everyone together.

Melon says

Updated review:

I am sad to report that I did not enjoy this book nearly so much as I thought I was going to. I have to quote the acknowledgements section in the back of the book; "This book wouldn't have been possible without my agent, Gail Hochman, who read the first draft and told me in the nicest possible way that it didn't make any goddamn sense." Presumably several drafts later, I have to still agree with the sentiment. I mean, it made sense in the sense that I could follow the plot, but not in what the point of the novel was, or what I was supposed to get from it. There were a few pearls in here for sure, but a cohesive novel it did not make. Now, I know this was supposed to be a "retelling" or "reimagining" or maybe at least a homage, to the story of Abraham and Isaac--and maybe I'm just not smart enough to get it--but I just thought it was poorly and barely connected. I don't generally get hung up on "unlikeable" characters, but these folks really took the cake. Barely a redeemable quality in the lot of 'em. In fact, the only character I really enjoyed was the arbitrator present in one chapter. I really wanted to enjoy this book, but I just couldn't. My apologies to the author, who as I mentioned below, was kind enough to send me a copy of this book for this review.

Placeholder review...

I just want to say that I won a free copy of this book, but it never arrived. I tried to get in touch with the publisher, but never heard back. Finally I sent an email to the author, and he mailed me a copy himself! I just got it in the mail today; barely started, but I can already tell I'm going to enjoy it.

Barbara Barrow says

I enjoyed this smart if somewhat unevenly graceful book, which goes back and forth mostly between Abbie, a once-principled architect who sells out to big developers, and Isabel, a recent transplant and CMU employee in Pittsburgh who becomes entangled with Abbie's family. On one level, it is about a man who has visions and gets wrapped up in a corrupt real estate deal; it is also, somewhat surprisingly (given how the book is marketed), about the environment, the vulnerability of ecosystems, and the destruction of wooded lands. There are many striking descriptions of Pittsburgh and there's a fair bit of jumping back and forth between characters' present and past lives--a device I sometimes found a little distracting when I wanted to stay in the characters' heads for longer. When we get to stay in their minds and spaces for a bit (as in the powerful concluding chapters) the story works well for me.

Bill O'driscoll says

Fine second novel by the Pittsburgh-based author, set mostly there and in the small southwestern Pennsylvania city of Uniontown. It's a modern retelling of the story of Abraham and Isaac, and smartly

recapitulates the Old Testament obsessions with land ownership and paternity and filial duty. As in his debut novel, "The Bend of the World," Bacharach's style is witty, his observations deft, but he's going after even bigger game here, in God, or man's relationship to God, and the difference between having a moral code (or any sort of ideals) and actually living up to it. Greed, neuroses, the lust for power and status, plus a proximity to shady land deals, all assure these characters won't make it to that particular promised land. An ambitious project, a highly entertaining book.

EvilRoySlade69 says

The first 3rd of the book is horrendously written with characters who inspire nothing but contempt. The last two thirds are better but not much.

Suzanne says

Strange and intricate retelling of Abraham's story in the Old Testament, reset in the 1980s and present day. All the same characters are here for reader's pleasure: Sarah, Isaac, and in due course we meet modern versions of Hagar and Ishmael. At heart the plot appears to be about God's promise of land for Abraham and his descendants. Although the author is too clever to make that an easy assessment. I would have enjoyed the book more if it rambled less and employed more surprises. Surprises were used to very great effect. I received my copy from the publisher through NetGalley.
