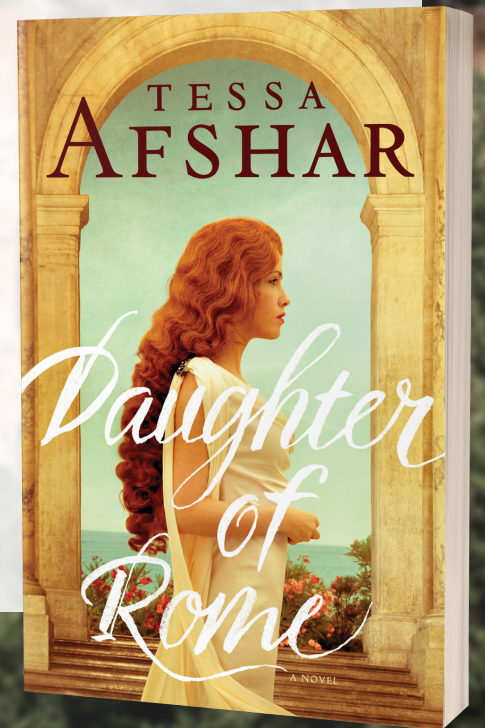


# Daughter of Rome

Book Club Kit



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# Praise for *Daughter of Rome*

"[An] intricate biblical setting will engross readers. This is Afshar's strongest, most complex scripture-based story yet."

***Publishers Weekly***

"An intricate Christian novel focused on Priscilla and Aquila, following them from their charged first meeting through to their work as Corinthian tent makers. From life under the threat of persecution to domestic details and her characters' innermost thoughts, [Tessa Afshar] makes early Christianity spark."

***Foreword Reviews***

"Tessa Afshar has the rare gift of seamlessly blending impeccable historical research and theological depth with lyrical prose and engaging characters."

**Sharon Garlough Brown, author of *Shades of Light*  
and the *Sensible Shoes Series***

"*Daughter of Rome* is a feast for your imagination as well as balm for your soul."

**Robin Jones Gunn, bestselling author of *Becoming Us***





# A Note from Tessa Afshar

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Who were Priscilla and Aquila? We don't know much about this extraordinary couple who saved Paul's life, set up house churches in three different cities, and became influential spiritual leaders through some of the most harrowing years of the church's history. The fact that Priscilla served alongside her husband cannot be disputed. The unusual mention of her name before his in several passages suggests that, indeed, on certain occasions, she might have been considered the more knowledgeable teacher and a respected leader in her own right.

Priscilla is a diminutive for Prisca, a name that might give us a clue to this remarkable woman's identity. The male version of Prisca's name, Priscus, was a well known Roman appellation, belonging to a noble Roman family. Prominent Roman households had a habit of naming their slaves after the patriarch. As such, Prisca (female for Priscus) could be a slave name.

However, Priscilla was married, which means that she could not have been a slave, as slaves were not allowed to marry. Hence, she was either a member of the Priscus family or a freed slave. The latter option is not likely since the Romans rarely freed their female slaves. To me, the most plausible option points to Priscilla being a scion of the Priscus family. The story line deals with this heritage.

According to the book of Acts, Emperor Claudius commanded "all the Jews to leave Rome" (Acts 18:2). Such a wholesale banishment of the Jewish population seems problematic to most scholars. At the time, Rome had a substantial Jewish population, and the sudden expulsion of such a great number of the citizenry would have been noted in several archives—something we lack. However, most of the Jews in Rome were citizens. This made me think that perhaps all the Jews who were not citizens had been expelled.

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The Bible is rarely interested in mentioning such distinctions, and the generalized comment in Acts would make sense since its only purpose is to explain Aquila and Priscilla's presence in Corinth, not to give an exact historical recitation. Hence, I believe "all the Jews" in the passage refers to all the Jews who were not citizens, an explanation which perfectly aligns the historical and biblical accounts.

Aquila, a Jew, was originally from Pontus (Acts 18:2). We know that the church had been well established in Pontus by the early 60s (1 Peter 1:1-2), about ten years after the events in *Daughter of Rome*. Certainly during this period, there would have been Christians in Pontus. Yet even with Priscilla and Aquila's extensive travels, Pontus is never mentioned as one of their destinations. The plot takes this curious absence into account.

How, precisely, did our indomitable couple risk their necks to save Paul's life (Romans 16:4)? This remains another unsolved biblical mystery, which makes for fun fiction. Some scholars believe the occasion is related to the events in Corinth; others feel that it might have occurred later, in Ephesus. In either case, we only know that the apostle felt that he owed his life to Priscilla and Aquila.

Some of the descriptions of the synagogue in Rome, which has not survived the ravages of time, are based on the third-century synagogue discovered in Dura Europos, where men and women sat together during worship.

The Hill of Amphorae, made entirely of broken pottery shards, would have been more of a molehill in this period and not fully developed for another ninety years. However, I was so enchanted by the concept that I cheated on the timeline and included it in the novel.

Besides Priscilla, Aquila, and Paul, several other characters in *Daughter of Rome* are based on historical figures. Rufus and his mother are mentioned in Romans 16:13 among those whom Paul greets with affection. We know that Simon of Cyrene (present-day Libya) had two sons, one of whom was named Rufus (Mark 15:21). It is not unlikely that these are one and the same man. Pudens is mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:21. According to church tradition, Pudens was a senator in Rome who welcomed Peter and Paul into his house and was baptized by one of them. Later he was martyred under Nero. Both his daughters went on to be recognized as saints of the church, opening their homes for the work of God and ministering to the needs of the poor.

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Stephanas was a respected member of the church at Corinth, whose family became the first converts in Greece (1 Corinthians 16:15-18). He and his household were among those few that Paul baptized personally (1 Corinthians 1:16). Other biblical figures in the novel include Justus (Acts 18:7), Crispus (Acts 18:8); and Sosthenes (Acts 18:17).

Antonia is a fictional character. But the Emperor Claudius's tendency to be fooled by women of a certain character is well documented by history.

As usual, I used a few quotes in the context of the book for the sheer fun of it. Aquila's words at the end of chapter 8, "The only way to peace is by learning to accept, day by day, the circumstances and tests permitted by God. By the repeated laying down of our own will and the accepting of his as it is presented in the things which happen to us" are a paraphrase based on the preface to *Hinds' Feet on High Places* by Hannah Hurnard. Mary's words to Priscilla in chapter 19, "The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts such as yours. That things are not so ill with these folks as they might have been . . . is half-owing to you for living faithfully a hidden life" are a paraphrase of the closing scene in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*.

At the end of chapter 25, Aquila describes what Priscilla means to him, borrowing several phrases from C. S. Lewis's description of his own wife, Joy, in *A Grief Observed*. The minor adjustments I made to these quotes were in order to make the flow more seamless.

The more I studied this couple, the more they amazed and inspired me. They were iconoclasts, intrepid warriors for the Kingdom of God who broke the rules and helped change the world. Their marriage must have been an incredible partnership. Priscilla, especially, sheds some light on the crucial and extraordinary role of women in the early church.

As always, no novel can begin to capture the sheer depth of the Word of God. The best way to study the Scriptures is not through a work of fiction, but simply by reading the original. This story can in no way replace the transformative power that the reader will encounter in the Bible. To learn more about Priscilla and Aquila, please refer to Acts 18:1-28; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:3-5; and 2 Timothy 4:19.

Tessa Afshar







# Discussion Questions

**5.)** Priscilla faces a huge test of her faith—and faithfulness—when she has the opportunity to help Antonia, a person who has intentionally set out to harm Priscilla. How did her response to Antonia challenge your own faith? How did it encourage you?

**6.)** What was Aquila’s core struggle? Can you relate to him?

**7.)** Did you enjoy the subplot about Marcus? How did it add to Priscilla and Aquila’s story?

**8.)** As in previous books by the author, the apostle Paul makes an appearance. How do you feel about her portrayal of this early Christian leader? In what ways is the character in these pages like the man we read about in Scripture? Are there ways in which he is different?

**9.)** Did you find the portrayal of the early church in this book appealing? What can we learn from the lives of these early Christians? How can their struggles and victories inform our twenty-first-century worship and church life?

**10.)** If you have read *Thief of Corinth*, did you enjoy seeing Galenos and Theo again? Do you like it when authors bring back previous characters in new books?

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# Recipes

A wooden spoon filled with small, light-colored seeds, likely fennel or caraway, set against a dark, textured background with scattered seeds and a cinnamon stick.



# Biblical Recipes

A note from Tessa Afshar

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Some years ago, I watched a movie based on the story of a young woman who cooked, baked, and braised her way through the Julia Child cookbook in one year. I was intrigued. What if I did that with biblical foods?

As I started researching the topic, I realized this would be a complicated process. For one thing, we don't have any surviving recipes from the Old Testament times. We only have ingredients mentioned in the Bible and know that housewives tended their own kitchen gardens, growing herbs such as mint and dill weed, as well as fruits such as cucumbers.

A number of recipes do survive from the New Testament era, coming to us mostly from Romans such as Marcus Apicius, who was a wealthy dilettante with a love for food. These ancient recipes provide us with a list of ingredients, but no amounts.

Ultimately, I wanted to create recipes that busy, modern readers could attempt and prepare. Recipes that could be enjoyed by book groups and Bible studies. Building ancient ovens and killing the fatted calf was not an option.





I suppose it would be more accurate to say that I have created a number of *more or less* biblical recipes. I started my own little “biblical garden” and tried a variety of different ancient foods on my husband, who thank God, proved valiant enough to try them. I have had a blast creating these, and I hope you will too.

Since *Daughter of Rome* takes place in first century AD, we are only including Roman recipes here. For Old Testament recipes, please refer to *The Way Home*, my Bible study of the book of Ruth, due out in June 2020.

So fold up your toga, tuck in your stola, and let’s get down to some great modern biblical cooking.

### Recipe notes:

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**Note to readers:** Be sure to exercise caution when making these recipes! Remember you're trying them out for the first time and making and consuming the ingredients at your own risk. Happy cooking!

# Recipe: Garum

## Ingredients:

1 tablespoon anchovy paste  
1 tablespoon fresh oregano leaves  
1 teaspoon fresh mint leaves  
3 tablespoons sweet wine  
3 tablespoons water

## Directions:

Chop fresh herbs and blend with the anchovy paste. Add liquids and leave in the fridge for several days before straining. For a faster *garum*, just blend all the ingredients until liquid, before straining. It is not clear in color, like some of the *garums* you will find online. But it does the job.

## Note:

To create an authentic *garum*, you would need to ferment fish in your backyard. Yeah. Your neighbors won't like you. Even in first-century Rome, *garum* factories had to be built outside the city of Rome because the smell was too awful. But this salty sauce was a craze, because unlike salt, which has a tendency to extract the juices out of your meat, fish sauce added salt and juiciness to recipes. It was also expensive.

My recipe is an easy facsimile and has the advantage of not being offensive to the olfactory senses.

**Tip:** If you want to be really fancy and spend a lot of money, you can buy a modern Italian *garum* called *colatura di alici* for around \$25.

# Recipe: Passum

## Ingredients:

1 cup sweet wine like Riesling  
½ cup raisins

## Directions:

Soak raisins in the wine in a glass container with a lid. Refrigerate for at least a week. Mix well before straining out the wine (*passum*) for use. This sweet wine has a lovely fruity taste, which you can use in different recipes. (You can use the raisins separately.)

# Recipe: Apicius's Stewed Cucumbers

## Ingredients:

4 mini cucumbers, peeled  
¼ cup *passum*

## Directions:

Cut cucumbers into ½-inch rounds. Heat *passum* on low. Add cucumbers and stew for 3 to 4 minutes. Chill before serving. According to Apicius, the stewing process prevents indigestion.





# Recipe: Apicius's Carrots and Parsnips

## Ingredients:

2 white carrots  
2 parsnips  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 tablespoons *passum*

## Directions:

Wash and peel carrots and parsnips. Cut into long strips. Fry on low heat in olive oil, turning frequently to avoid burning. When soft, plate up and add *passum*. A delicious veggie.

## Note:

If you don't want alcohol in your food, add the *passum* to the pan after the vegetables have cooked through. Stir for a couple of minutes until the alcohol burns off.

## My recipe notes:

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# Recipe: Panis Quadratus

## Ingredients:

5 ½ cups spelt flour  
2 cups warm water (120°–  
130° F)  
1 tablespoon active dry yeast  
¼ cup olive oil  
½ cup honey  
½ tablespoon sea salt  
2 eight-inch cake pans,  
buttered

## Directions:

Preheat oven to 360° F, convection if you have it. In a large glass bowl, pour water. Monitor your temperature to ensure it is not too hot or cold. Add yeast and stir with a wooden spoon until yeast is properly dissolved. Add olive oil, honey, and salt and stir.

## Note:

In the mid-first century, when *Daughter of Rome* takes place, most Romans would have purchased their bread at public bakeries. Few people owned the huge specialized ovens needed for baking bread and found it more convenient to visit a bakery or to bake their bread in large, public ovens. One of the most popular breads was the *quadratus*, a round yeasted bread which received four shallow cuts before baking, segmenting it into eight pieces. We know what this bread looks like, because a number of intact loaves were discovered in Pompeii, preserved in the ashes of Mt. Vesuvius.

To feed the sprawling city of Rome, the Romans imported wheat in large quantities from around the world, especially Egypt. Our white or even wheat flour is very different from the flour people ate two thousand years ago.



# Recipe: Panis Quadratus

## Directions Continued:

Add a third of the flour and mix until smooth. Mix a third more. Setting aside 2 or 3 tablespoons of flour, mix the rest of the flour and begin to knead on a floured surface. Knead by hand for 7 minutes. Let your dough rise at room temperature for at least an hour. Dampen a clean cloth and cover it as it rises.

Using a scale, divide your dough into two equal parts. You can use a stretch and fold method and, using reserved flour, shape your dough into two loaves. Place them into greased pans. Cover with damp cloth and allow to rest for another hour.

When the dough is risen, use a large knife to make four shallow intersecting cuts across the bread. For an authentic look, tie kitchen string around the top of the dough. I gave up doing this after a few trials. It didn't stay on properly and didn't do much for the bread. Some food historians suspect that Roman bakers shaped their dough in a pan, but baked it free, and the string might have helped to keep the dough's shape.

Bake for 50 to 60 minutes. Bread pulls away from the sides when ready.

## My recipe notes:

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**Note:** To make the recipe easier for the modern baker, I used active dry yeast. But if you want to be closer to the Romans, use your own fresh yeast. I couldn't find a surviving *quadratus* recipe. Most of the food geeks out there just made up their own recipe and made it look like a *quadratus*. I experimented with a Bob's Red Mill spelt bread recipe and, after some adjustments, came up with this.



# Recipe: Priscilla's Chickpeas

## Ingredients:

4 shallots, cut into 6 pieces  
2 cloves of garlic, crushed  
and chopped  
1 leek  
1 teaspoon *garum*  
1 tablespoon *passum*  
1 cup dried chickpeas,  
washed and soaked  
overnight (or two cans of  
chickpeas, washed under  
water until they don't foam  
anymore)  
4 tablespoons olive oil  
1 tablespoon fresh coriander,  
chopped

## Optional Ingredients:

1 teaspoon baking soda  
½ teaspoon salt

## Directions:

Cover chickpeas in water and boil on medium heat until tender (about 10 minutes for canned chickpeas and 1.5 hours for dried). Remove foam as chickpeas cook. Meanwhile, fry your shallots, leek, and garlic in 2 tablespoons of olive oil, until everything is translucent and has golden edges.

Drain the cooked chickpeas. Add to the leek mixture and turn pan on low heat. Add *garum*, *passum*, and the rest of the olive oil and stir until everything is well incorporated, about 5 minutes. Add chopped coriander and serve.

**Tip:** If you add one teaspoon of baking soda to dried chickpeas, it will help them cook quicker and become more tender.

# Recipe: Apicius's Fresh Tuna with Garum

## Ingredients:

2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar  
2 teaspoons *garum*  
4 tablespoons olive oil  
4 shallots finely chopped  
½ teaspoon pepper  
2 medium tuna steaks  
3 tablespoons celery, finely chopped  
1 teaspoon mint, finely chopped

## Directions:

Mix vinegar, shallots, *garum*, and celery with two tablespoons of the olive oil. Set aside. Pepper the tuna steaks.

Add the rest of the olive oil to a saucepan on medium heat. When oil is hot, add tuna steaks. In our home, we like our fish well done, but you are not supposed to do that with tuna. So cook to your taste. I cooked ours for about 5 minutes before flipping it.

When you turn the tuna over, add half of your vinaigrette, and cook for an additional 5 minutes, or until the internal temperature reaches 140° F. Plate up your tuna. Add the rest of the vinaigrette and sprinkle with mint. So yummy.

## Note:

We prefer our shallots cooked through. So I sautéed them until golden before adding them to the vinaigrette.

**Note:** This was one of our favorite biblical recipes. We just about licked our plates, and my husband rarely even eats fish!

# Recipe: Libum (Sweet Cheese Buns)

## Ingredients:

8 ounces ricotta cheese, drained for 2 to 3 hours in cheesecloth (I keep it in the fridge)  
1 cup spelt flour, sifted  
1 egg, beaten  
1 teaspoon olive oil  
4 bay leaves  
½ cup honey, warmed

## Directions:

Preheat the oven to 425° F.

Drain the last of the water out of the cheese, and beat with a fork to make it fluffy. Add the egg and mix well. Add the mixture to the flour, and using your fingers, work gently until it's a soft dough. Divide the dough into four parts.

Mold each into a round bun. Grease your baking sheet with olive oil. Place one bay leaf under each bun on the sheet.

Bake for 30 to 35 minutes until golden brown. (Internal temperature should be between 200° and 210° F). Pour warm honey over the buns, using a spoon. Wait 30 minutes before serving. Simple and delicious.

## My recipe notes:

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# Recipe: Globuli

## Ingredients:

1 pound ricotta cheese, drained for 2 to 3 hours in cheesecloth (I keep it in the fridge)  
1 cup semolina  
1 tablespoon *passum*  
1/8 teaspoon fresh ground pepper  
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg  
1/2 cup light olive oil (or for a richer flavor, you can use 1/4 cup olive oil, 1/4 cup butter)  
1/2 cup honey plus 1 tablespoon *passum*, warmed over low heat

## Directions:

Mix all ingredients except olive oil and honey. Roll the dough into 1/2-inch balls.

Heat olive oil on low. Add the dough and turn quickly. Be careful as the dough can turn dark quickly. (Alternatively, you could use a fryer. I don't own one. But it would probably work well for this recipe.)

Dip the fried *globuli* into warm honey and *passum* until completely covered.

## My recipe notes:

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# Recipe: Mary's Roman Lentil Stew

## Ingredients:

1 cup washed brown lentils  
1 cup washed red lentils  
8 leeks, washed well and chopped into 1-inch rings  
1 tablespoon salt  
1 tablespoon vinegar  
1 tablespoon honey  
8 tablespoons olive oil  
coriander seeds  
½ teaspoon peppercorns  
½ teaspoon cumin  
3 tablespoons fresh coriander, chopped  
3 tablespoons fresh mint  
5 cups water  
2 cups good quality stock (Apicius does not indicate what kind of stock. If Mary was serving dairy that day, she would have had to use vegetable stock. I like chicken stock, which adds a rich flavor, without dominating the lentils.)

## Directions:

Fry the leeks in half the olive oil on low heat until golden brown.

Crush peppercorns and coriander seeds and add to the leeks. Stir for a few seconds until they release their aroma. Add lentils, salt, and water. Simmer on low. Stir frequently. Cook for about one hour. The red lentils will cook more quickly and fall apart, giving the stew a creamy texture.

Add broth, honey, vinegar, and cumin, and cook for an additional 30 minutes, or until cooked through.

Just before serving, add fresh coriander, mint leaves, and the rest of the olive oil and serve.



**Note:** The Romans loved cumin. Personally I find cumin an abomination and refuse to add it to anything. So when I cooked this recipe, I left it out. But I have included it here for authenticity. Apicius's recipe asks for rue, which I did not have. Apparently the taste of rue is somewhat bitter and quite unique, so it can't be replaced by another herb. But if you can get your hands on some garden rue, chuck a teaspoon into your stew. Apicius also included fleabane, another bitter herb I did not have, which I substituted with leeks, a Roman favorite.

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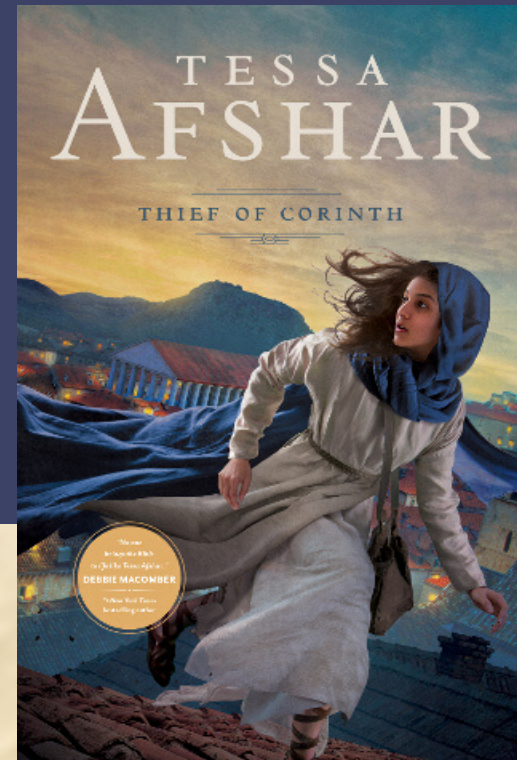
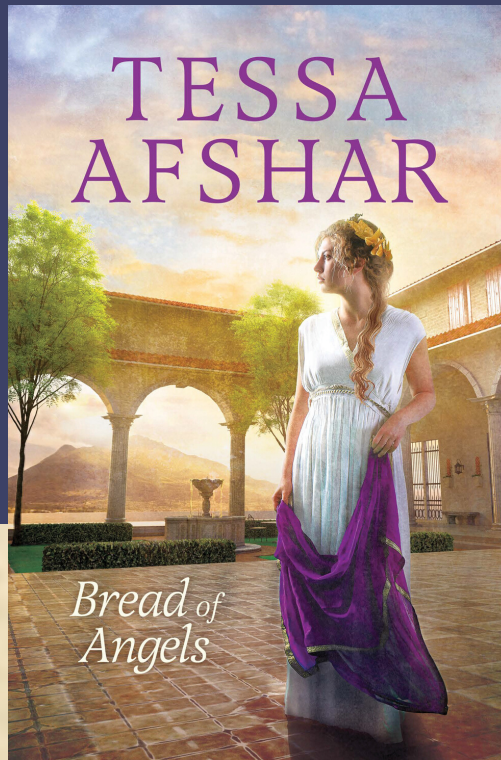
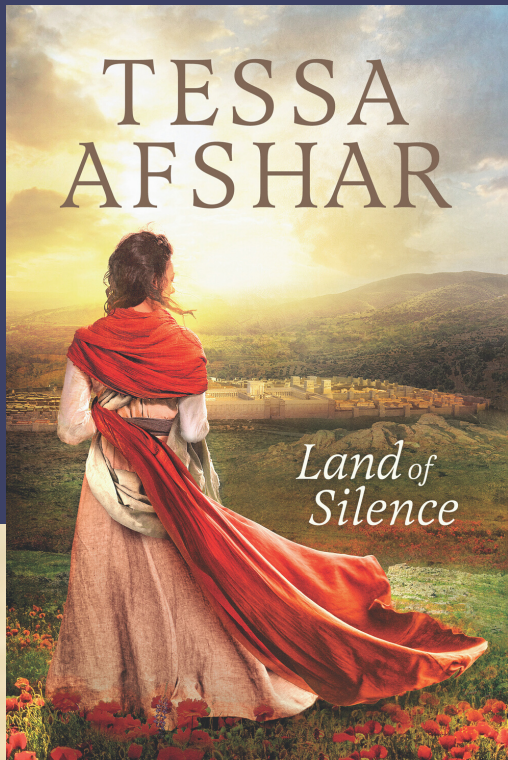
*Daughter  
of  
Rome*

as your book club pick!

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