

Review of Tim Frank, *Daughter of Lachish*. Eugene: Resource Publications, 2010.

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Judah and Assyria. We read the texts, we apply templates and critical lenses as tools for analysing imperial powers, but do we stop and ask what it was like to live in those times, to be Judahite, caught up in a world of Assyrian power? Can we imagine it? With an eye on its market, Resource Publications, an imprint of Wipf & Stock, is now also publishing novels among its wide range. Tim Frank, a graduate both of Otago University and the University of Auckland (the book is dedicated to Dr Alice Sinnott) has taken full advantage of this with a book that does just that, not only imagining but bringing such a world vividly alive. He is well qualified for the task as a staff member of the Lahav Research Project, excavating Tell Halif in Israel, and so understands the context in which he sets this story. As Oded Borowski, the director of Phase IV, writes in the online summary of the project, which, in this phase, is exploring the remains of the eighth century town on the site in the southern Shephelah, “[i]t is most likely that King Sennacherib in 701 BCE destroyed Stratum VIB during his march from Philistia to Lachish and Jerusalem when he tried to quell the revolt led by King Hezekiah of Judah”.¹ Tim Frank’s story captures it well, beginning with the siege and destruction of Lachish, but for the most part exploring the lives of ordinary people now displaced and eking out their daily lives in the countryside under the shadow of Assyrian power. It’s life and death stuff in ancient Judah. To say that once I started reading, I could not put it down is a reviewing cliché, but, in fact, it is quite true. The characters and the world in which they live really do come alive. I found myself feeling for Rivkah, the daughter of Lachish, so determined to survive after escaping the destruction of her city; I kept reading, wondering what was going to happen for her next. The Assyrians, and the Assyrian war machine, also have a human face in the soldier Itur-Ea; I was sorry when he left the story, dying alone on a hillside as the army marched on. The pathos was real, as it is throughout this book, and he was such a likeable character. Biblical passages are interwoven, quite naturally, as part of Judean life and Micah himself, now an old man, a grandfather and great grandfather, enters the narrative, reminiscing about past prophecies but still a man of wisdom and faith, especially for Rivkah. As a book that, to quote the summary on the back page, “melds archaeology and biblical studies”, this will be of interest to anyone wanting to get a feel of the period. It is also a very good read.



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¹ Oded Borowski, “Tell Halif”, at <http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/halif357921.shtml> Retrieved 7/3/2011.