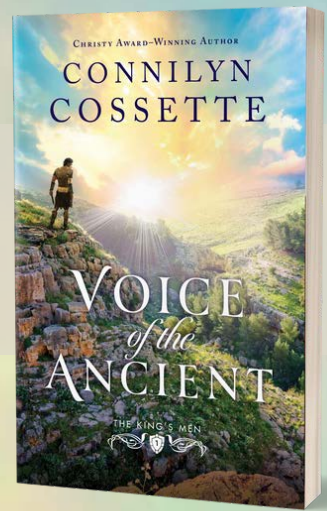


BOOK CLUB GUIDE





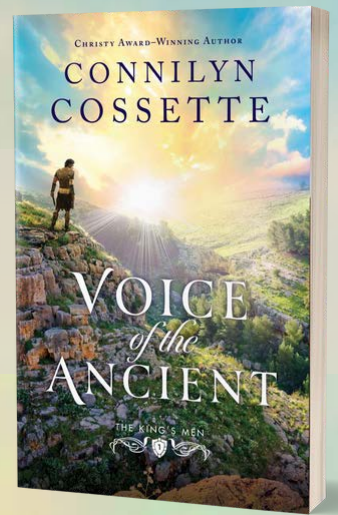
FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Book Club Coordinator,

I am so honored that you have chosen *Voice of the Ancient* to read with your book club and hope that you and your group enjoy Avidan and Keziah's journey in the lands across the Jordan River. I was excited to write this series for a variety of reasons, and one of those was that I missed some of my favorite characters from the Covenant House series and was curious about what their children were getting up to. Lucky for me (and my readers!), the timing fit perfectly with the early years of King Saul's reign, so I've gotten to dig around in a new era and explore what it might have been like in this time of transition for Israel.

Unfortunately, very soon after I began work on this story, I was diagnosed with stage three triple negative breast cancer and immediately began an aggressive course of fifteen chemotherapy treatments, followed by a double mastectomy and six weeks of daily radiation. I am now, by the grace of God, cancer free and on the other side of these difficult treatments, with only one more follow-up reconstructive surgery in the fall. Much of this book was written in the middle of those difficult days, and many times I was scribbling away on scenes right there in the chemo chair. I learned a great deal about the sustaining power of the Lord, who not only gave me strength to fight a battle I never anticipated, but also helped me to keep my pen moving even when the strong chemo medications attacked me in the way I dreaded the most—by fogging my mind and squelching my vivid imagination.





Ultimately, spending my days traveling alongside Avi, Keziah, and Sarru ended up being such a blessing to me during my treatments and surgeries, as it became a way for me to escape what was going on in my real life and immerse myself instead in the ancient world of the Bible and the adventures of my characters. I hope for you and your book-loving friends that this story is just as much of a blessing and an inspiration to share the ancient words of the One True King with both those around you who may have forgotten their heritage and those who have never known the depth of the Creator's love for them and the sacrifice He made for their salvation.

Thank you for spending your precious time reading *Voice of the Ancient* and gathering fellow book lovers to discuss this first book in the King's Men series. I pray that your group will have a lively and profitable discussion about this story and a wonderful time of fellowship and fun as you meet together.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Connilyn

Connilyn Cossette

ConnilynCossette.com



MINI TOUR

Let's take a little mini tour of just a few of the settings in *Voice of the Ancient*, beginning with Ramah, which is the birthplace of the prophet Samuel. Somewhere adjacent to this city was Naioth, the community built as a school for prophets, which serves as the home base for Avidan's Levite family and where it is more than likely Samuel wrote his portions of the Old Testament. Ramah is identified with a place now called Er-Ram in Israel (a currently Palestinian city), but I found this interesting pre-modern settlement photo from 1915 of the hill of Ramah, which would be a much better representation of what it could have looked like in Samuel (and Avidan's) day. However, the land of Israel has been horribly deforested over the last couple of thousand years due to a number of reasons, so this hill would have boasted many more trees in the early Iron Age. Thankfully, ever since the Jewish people reclaimed their homeland in 1948, they have planted millions of new trees and it is flourishing again.





Image from bibleplaces.com

Next on our mini tour is the city of Yavesh (in some translations it is Jabesh or Jabesh-Gilead). This city was located only a stone's throw across the Jordan from Beit She'an. The place most scholars believe is the ruins of Yavesh is in a beautiful, hilly region that would have been heavily forested back then, since it was located in an area actually called the Forests of Ephraim. King Saul's own roots were here in this town, as he was very likely a descendant of one of the young women who were captured to provide wives to the remaining men of Benjamin after the devastating civil war in Judges 21. I wonder what treasures of history are still to be found underneath all that dirt?



Image from bibleplaces.com



Image from Wikipedia

Avidan and Keziah have some adventures in and around the Jabbok River (now called the Zarqa River in modern-day Jordan). This river headwaters near what is currently Ammon, Jordan, but in ancient times was called Rabbah-Ammon, the chief city of the Ammonites that Saul and the tribal armies fought against in 1 Samuel 11 at Jabesh-Gilead. As you can see, this river cuts westward through the hilly region of Gilead, eventually descending into the Jordan River Valley, where it empties into the Jordan itself north of Jericho. This river is also the place where the patriarch Jacob had his famous and mysterious wrestling match in Genesis 32, giving him the limp he was afflicted with the rest of his life and changing his name to Israel, which means "strives with God."





Image from Adobe Stock



View from the top of Nebo (above)

One of the most intriguing sites in the Bible has to be Mount Nebo, which is the mountain where Moses met his end and was buried by Yahweh himself in a place only He knows. My fictional tribe of Rehavites (although Rehaviah, for whom they are named, was an actual grandson of Moses) lived near this mountain, regarding it as holy. To this day, millions of people have made pilgrimages to this place where Moses was given a panoramic view of the Holy Land he had longed to enter for forty years, but because of his disobedience in striking the rock, it became the land in which he would never set his sandal.

View of the Mountain itself (below)

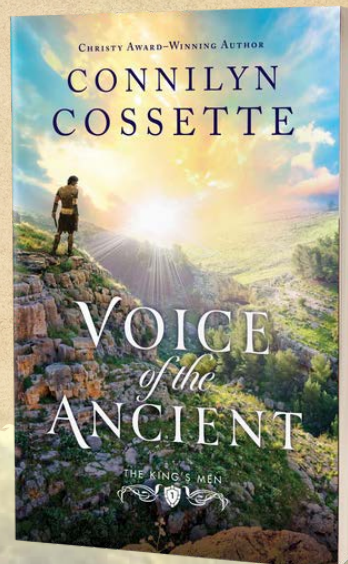


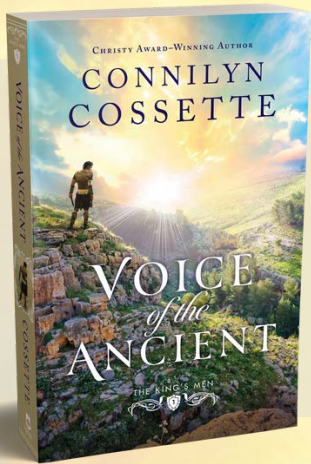
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Image from asor.org

This is a possible location of Heshbon, the ancient city built by King Sihon, who was overthrown during the Conquest, and it is the location of Avidan's search for his cousin. No one knows exactly what the famous pools of Heshbon referred to in Song of Solomon looked like, but at this site, known as Tel Jalul, archeologists discovered a number of ancient reservoirs and water channels, along with four stairstep pools that flowed one into the other. There was so much excess water in this area that the ancient inhabitants had to create complicated systems to deal with the overflow. Interestingly, the site nearby known as Tel Heshban hasn't yielded much in the way of Bronze Age evidence for settlement, so perhaps it needs a new name!

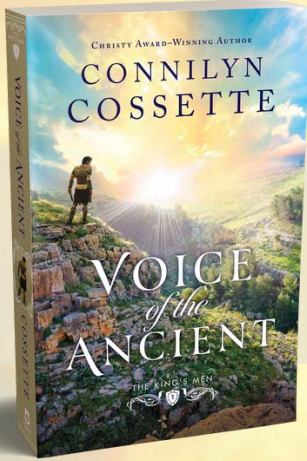




VOICE OF THE ANCIENT PERSONAL NAMES PRONOUNCIATION GUIDE

- Avidan: ah vee DAHN
- Azan : ah ZAHN
- Belah : bay LAH
- Bram : brahm
- Chava : kha VAH
- Demeliah : day meh LEE ah
- Dorel : dohr EL
- Elidor : elee DOHR
- Eliora : ey lee OR ah
- Estal : esh TAHL
- Gassan : gah SAHN
- Gavriel : gah vree EL
- Gedor : gey DOHR
- Hanan: KHAH nahn
- Hodiyah: ho DYE ah
- Imati : ee MAH tee
- Iyov : ee YOHv
- Kamon: kah MOAN
- Keziah: keh ZYE ah
- Kish : keesh
- Koli : KOH lee
- Lena : LEY nah
- Liba: LEE bah
- Lotan : low TAHN
- Mailah: MY lah
- Meital : may TAHL
- Menachem : men ah KHEM
- Miri : mee ree
- Naar: nah ar
- Nabal : nah BALL
- Natan: nah TAHN
- Naveed : nah VEEed
- Noa : NO ah
- Numa : NOO mah
- Ohel : oh HEL
- Omar : oh MAHR
- Qadir : kah DEER
- Raham : rah HAHM
- Rasul : rah SOOL
- Rayed : rah YED
- Rezev : reh ZEV
- Ronen : ROH nehn
- Sarru : sah ROO
- Shalem : Shay LEHM
- Shiron: shee ROHN
- Shoshana : show SHAH nah
- Simi : see mee
- Suyah : SOO yah
- Tam : tahm
- Tannir : tah NEER
- Vadim: vah DEEM
- Yahweh: YAH way
- Yonatan: yo nah TAHN
- Zakir : zah KEER
- Zevi: Zeh vee

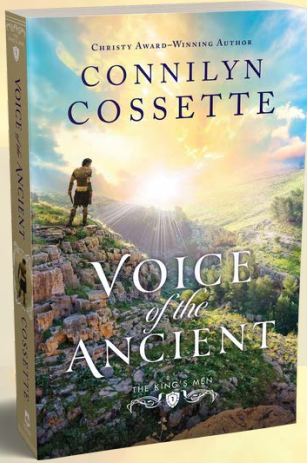




DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The prologue of *Voice of the Ancient* takes place during the casting of lots that publicly appointed Saul the first King of Israel. If you had been there up on the ridge with Avidan and his cousins, spying on the gathering, what would have been the most fascinating thing to you about that event?
2. One of the author's favorite things about writing the King's Men series is revisiting some of her favorite characters from the Covenant House series. Who were you most excited about seeing again? Who would you like to see more of?
3. In her loneliness, Keziah regards her horse Sarru as her only friend. Have you ever had a beloved pet that filled that role in your own life? In what way was that animal a comfort to you in difficult times?
4. Avidan's cousins are his best friends but have a falling-out that fractures what had been solid relationship between the four of them for almost a decade. How do you think the cousins will mend what has been broken?





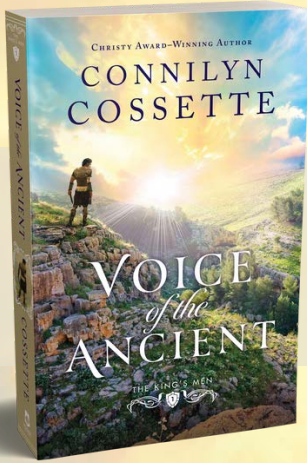
5. One of the cousins goes missing during the battle for Yavesh. What do you think actually happened to him? What is your guess about when/where he might be found?

6. Who did you think was most at fault for the missing cousin's disappearance? Why?

7. Who is your favorite cousin so far? Why are you drawn to him?

8. Avidan was born into a family of musicians and yet has no interest in music or instruments. How are you different from your family of origin? In what ways are you similar? Has there ever been tension because you or a sibling chose a different path than your parents expected?





9. Through Avi's stories, Keziah comes to realize that she has been ignorantly worshipping false gods and learns to lay them down in order to worship Yahweh. What initially drew you to Jesus? Who was the biggest influence in your journey toward accepting His kingship over your life?

10. There comes a point when both main characters have to make a difficult choice between two loved ones. Have you ever had to make a choice that seemed nearly impossible? In hindsight, would you have made a different decision?

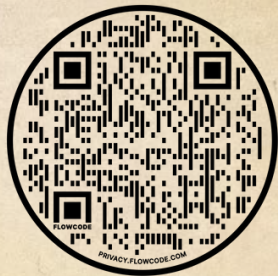
11. During Avi's travels with Keziah, he comes to have compassion for the confused Hebrews who live across the river and experiences a calling to remind them of their true heritage and identity as people of Yahweh. Do you see any modern parallels? How does his story inspire you to reach the people around you with the Truth?



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