



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH CONNILYN COSSETTE



Counted With the Stars

OUT FROM EGYPT #1
by Connilyn Cossette
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1. What is the story of *Counted With the Stars* about?

Counted With the Stars is the story of Kiya, a wealthy young Egyptian who is sold by her father to satisfy his debts. She is forced to endure slavery under a cruel mistress who takes pleasure in humiliating her. Through an unlikely friendship with a Hebrew slave named Shira, Kiya hears stories of an invisible God and a man named Moses who has come to free the Hebrews from slavery. When terrible plagues begin to strike, Kiya is forced to confront her beliefs in the gods of Egypt. To save her older brother’s life and break the bonds of slavery, she chooses to flee with the Hebrews in the great Exodus. Kiya is drawn to a man who despises her people, and she struggles with how to surrender to the God who destroyed the homeland that she loves.

2. Why did you choose to write biblical fiction?

I grew up reading some wonderful and inspiring biblical fiction but it was not a conscious decision to write in this genre. Kiya’s story simply came out of my own personal study into Exodus and the foundations of my faith in the Hebrew Messiah. As I began to dig into the historical and cultural settings of the Exodus story, I found myself wondering about the “mixed multitude” in Exodus 12:38 and imagining what would make an Egyptian choose to go with the Hebrews. Kiya’s story began with an image in my mind of an Egyptian woman standing on the eastern bank of the Jordan River, waiting to enter the Promised Land. Kiya would not leave me alone until I told the story of how she turned away from the gods of Egypt to follow Yahweh to that place.

3. What truths do you hope the reader comes away with?

Kiya’s story is, in many ways, the story of all of us who were once in bondage to sin. Like Kiya, there is a point where God confronts us with a choice: Will you accept the free gift of salvation and turn away from your idols? Or will you cling to the world in which you are comfortable and refuse to surrender to God? As we all do, Kiya struggles with laying aside the idols she has long held in esteem and allowing the Lord to speak love into her life. When we hold tightly to the world, we cannot receive the abundant blessings God has for us. But above all, I hope that the reader will see the marvelous grace that Yahweh shows his people from Genesis to Revelation and on every page in between.

4. What fascinating things did you discover about Ancient Egypt in your research?

The culture of the Ancient Egyptians is foreign to us—the worship of many gods, the mixture of magic and medicine, the mummies and gilded sarcophagi. But what I discovered was how much they were like us. Egypt had its own celebrity culture, where the royals were placed on high pedestals, worshiped as gods, and everything from their cosmetics to fashion was emulated by the average Egyptian. They dyed their gray hair, slathered anti-wrinkle cream on their skin, and wore clothing that emphasized narrow waists and broad shoulders; they were obsessed with youth and beauty. The Pharaohs even made sure that depictions of themselves were edited to make them look their

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best—let’s call it an ancient version of Photoshop. They were also a highly educated people who valued knowledge in mathematics, languages, and architecture. Their art and craftsmanship was highly advanced; they were making colored glass and intricate metal and wood pieces that defy the idea that early men were ignorant and unskilled. They loved music and dancing, wrote love poems, and scribbled bits of gossip and jokes on shards of pottery. They were real people who laughed and loved and wondered who they were and where their place was in this vast universe.

5. There are two more books in the OUT FROM EGYPT series. Can you tell us what comes next?

The next book in the OUT FROM EGYPT series is *Shadow of the Storm*, which is a continuation of the Exodus journey, but from the point of view of Kiya’s Hebrew friend Shira. As I wrote *Counted With the Stars* Shira became one of my favorite characters, and I was eager to discover more about her and her journey in the wilderness. Shira will be forced to deal with the wounds of her past and take steps toward an uncertain future while learning about who she is and who God created her to be. The third book in the series, *Wings of the Wind*, brings us forward in time to the year before the Hebrews enter the Promised Land. This book is from the point of view of Alanah, a Canaanite woman, who is determined to avenge the family killed by the Hebrew invaders by stepping onto the battlefield herself. When she is captured by a Hebrew warrior and her deepest fears become real, Yahweh will reveal himself and his plan for her life in a mighty way—a way that will affect not only the Hebrew conquest of the Promised Land but the very bloodline of the coming Messiah.