

A Woman of Valor: Can she find herself?

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Lihi Lapid, *Woman of Valor*, Gefen Publishing House, (c) 2013, ISBN 9789652296405 , 202 pages

By Donald H. Harrison

SAN DIEGO –This is a combination novel and confession by Lihi Lapid concerning her own married life and that of a fictional domestic princess, both of whom eventually feel overwhelmed by the self-imposed obligations of being a good wife, mother, homemaker, daughter, friend, and careerist. Both force themselves to live up to the presumed expectations of others around them and so exhaust themselves by the efforts that they become embittered with life and even more so with their oblivious spouses.

Lapid, who writes a column for women in the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Ahronot* (“*Latest News*”), intersperses these two interwoven stories with quotations from the Bible (as chapter headings) and with letters from her column’s readers. As depicted in their letters, the lives of these readers sometimes parallel, and at other times contrast, with the soul-wearying situations that the author and her fictional princess face as their children go through infancy and toddler-hood.

The men in this story are mostly silent, blithely assuming that by going out every day and earning a living that pays for the rent, the food bills, the telephone, gas, electric, and furniture, they are doing their “jobs,” in the marriages. They don’t realize that it is their very ability to go to another environment—where their work is noticed, and even appreciated—that greatly irritates their wives, who, in contrast, feel trapped in their homes, inconsequential in the eyes of their peers, and utterly fatigued by their children’s never-ending demands upon them. In Lapid’s personal story, one child’s demands are only implied. She is autistic and never speaks.

While some might take this as a book of complaints, I thought it contained tremendous insight. It allowed me to glimpse, if not outright fathom, the emotional lives of the important women in my life, as well as others I have met along the way. I realize that, like many men, I need to do a better job of understanding the stresses upon them and their very different psychological needs.

I think women especially should read this book, because not only will they identify with different portions of it, but also because it may prompt them to ask themselves whether they really need to do everything that they do.

I really can’t say that everyone should read this, but *Woman of Valor* definitely is a candidate for the attention of the following classes of people: 1) Those who are contemplating marriage. 2) Those who are married. 3) Those who are no longer married.

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