

Jerusalem's Undead Trilogy VALLEY OF BONES a novel by Eric Wilson
-- reading group guide --

1. We encounter the infamous Rasputin in the prologue. Did you know he had traveled to Jerusalem? If you've read Eric's earlier book, "Expiration Date," did you make the connections to that book? What did you think of the way this scene played into scenes in the book's climax?
2. In "Haunt of Jackals" a major surprise was unveiled, but in the year 2010. Did you like the fact "Valley of Bones" went back to explain how Gina dealt with its realities? Or did that seem unnecessary to you?
3. What emotions did you have toward Nikki Lazarescu? Did you understand her fateful decision, in light of her character? What could she have done differently?
4. Gina becomes friends with Sgt. Turney and Josee, characters from Eric's first two novels. How were they important? In what ways were Gina and Josee alike?
5. In this book, we see the Akeldama Cluster fight amongst themselves? Did you see some spiritual parallels? Who did you find yourself hating more than ever--Megiste, Natira, or Erota?
6. Were you already familiar with the story of the golem? What did you think of this Jewish mythology added into the story?
7. There are a few nods to Aramis Black, a character from Eric's mystery series. If you've read those books, did you catch the handful of references? Which specific element helped the Collectors in their goals?
8. As Collectors and Nistarim converge in Israel, they make camp on the shores of the Dead Sea? Using some literary license, Eric suggests that this is the "valley of dry bones" from the prophet Ezekiel's biblical vision. Did this add to the story? Distract? Was it immaterial to you?
9. Even as battle rages, Natira and Cal have their own encounter in Jerusalem? How did this weaken Cal? What did you think of Cal's last scene in the book? Was it fitting or too rushed?
10. Some readers thought it went against the trilogy's own rules to have immortal Nistarim killed in battle, only to be raised again by Nazarene Blood? Did this fit within the trilogy's framework, as you understood it? Had this precedent been established, or did you find that it seemed forced?
11. We discover in the last few chapters that Barabbas has not been under the Collectors' control, not in the way he always believed. What did you think of his internal struggle? Have you ever felt like you were beyond help or change? Do you think he would provide an interesting main character for a future story?
12. The shofar, mentioned in each book of the series, plays into the final pages of the story. What was the symbolism? Did you feel challenged, as a human being, as a child of God, to stand against evil and turn from poor choices? Or did it seem like a traditional reference with little bearing? What was your overall reaction to this trilogy's story arc, from Gina's change to her mother's decisions to her father's farewell?