



Gabriel's Palace: Jewish Mystical Tales

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A vast bounty of tales recounting mystical experiences among the rabbis can be found in the Talmud, the Zohar, Jewish folktales, and Hasidic lore. Now, in *Gabriel's Palace*, scholar Howard Schwartz has collected the greatest of these stories, sacred and secular, in a marvelously readable anthology.

Gabriel's Palace offers a treasury of 150 pithy and powerful tales, involving experiences of union with the divine, out-of-body travel, encounters with angels and demons, possession by spirits holy and pernicious, and more. Schwartz provides an informative introduction placing these remarkable tales firmly in the context of centuries of post-biblical Jewish tradition. The body of the text presents spellbinding tales from the Talmud, Zohar, the Hasidic masters, and an enormous range of other sources. Here are stories of Shimon bar Yohai, reputed to be the author of the Zohar; Isaac Luria, known as the Ari, who was the central figure among the Safed mystics of the 16th century; Israel ben Eliezer, known as Baal Shem Tov, who founded Hasidism; Elimelech of Lizensk, possessor of legendary mystical powers; and Nachman of Bratslav, the great storyteller whose wandering spirit is said to protect his followers to this day. Together, these tales paint a vivid picture of "a world of signs and symbols, where everything that took place had meaning, a world of mythic proportions....A world in which the spirits of the dead were no longer invisible, nor the angels," where the master and his disciples labor to repair the world so that the footsteps of the Messiah might be heard.

Drawn from rabbinic, kabbalistic, folk, and Hasidic sources, these collected tales form a rich genre all their own. In *Gabriel's Palace*, the powerful tradition of Jewish mysticism comes to life in clear, contemporary English.

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