



The Classic Tales: 4,000 Years of Jewish Lore

By Ellen Frankel

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The Classic Tales: 4,000 Years of Jewish Lore By Ellen Frankel

Three hundred Jewish tales in this extraordinary volume span three continents and four millennia. Culled from traditional sources—the Bible, Talmud, Midrash, hasidic texts, and oral folklore—and retold in modern English by Ellen Frankel, these stories represent the brightest jewels in the vast treasure chest of Jewish lore.

Beautifully clothed in contemporary language, these classic tales sparkle with the gentle and insightful humor of the Jewish folk imagination. And like so much of Jewish literature, these stories abound in allusions to classic Jewish texts. Biblical cadences, phrases from the prayer book, and ideas from Jewish proverbs and heroic legends resonate in the air when these tales are read or told aloud. In *The Classic Tales*, history sheds its dust to become as intimate as family memory.

While the breadth and depth of this book make it completely unique, three special features also help distinguish it: God appears without gender (though certainly not without personality); women characters, so often nameless in the original biblical text, wear their midrashic names (e.g., Noah's wife Naamah, Abraham's mother Amitlai, Lot's wife Edith); and many tales of Sephardic origin have been included to correct the common American bias toward Eastern European sources.

What's more, this volume has been uniquely designed to be of use to educators, rabbis, parents, and students. It features a chronological table of contents as well as six separate indexes—arranged by Jewish holidays, Torah and Haftarah readings, character types, symbols, topics, and proper names and places—to make the tales easily referenced in a wide variety of ways. Anyone who needs a story to inspire a child, to illustrate a point, to develop a sermon, or just to uplift his or her own thirsting soul will find just the right one in *The Classic Tales*.

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The Classic Tales: 4,000 Years of Jewish Lore By Ellen Frankel Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Frankel has compiled the classic stories and tales of 4,000 years of Jewish legend, and made them accessible without necessitating hours of Talmudic study. There's Lot's Wife, The Witches of Ashkelon, and 298 more, culled from the Bible, the Talmud, and Diaspora lore. The writing is simple enough to read aloud to children, the font's large enough to invite the tired eye, and the selection's interesting enough to read to yourself after bedtime stories are over. Well-referenced so you can look up the Giant Og when you want, it's the sort of book that becomes a family favorite.

From Library Journal

"Superb" is the word needed to describe this retelling of 300 Jewish stories in chronological order spanning 4000 years and three continents. Drawing from Talmudic, Midrashic, Hasidic, and folktale sources, Frankel has put together a rich anthology of Jewish tales imbued with the spiritual values of Judaism and the age-old folk wisdom of the Jewish people. Enhancing the collection are several indexes arranged by character types, symbols, topics, and names and places that enable readers to locate specific kinds of material. Also included are a helpful glossary and bibliography containing all the sources used by the author. Sure to become a modern classic, this labor of love, despite its cost, is highly recommended.

- Robert A. Silver, *Shaker Heights P.L., Ohio*

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Review

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In *The Classic Tales*, Ellen Frankel has created a work that will itself become a classic. These 300 stories represent the broad panorama of Jewish lore from all parts of the world, from biblical times through the hasidic masters of the nineteenth century. The book is much more than a retelling of tales, though. Frankel has combined a scholarly approach, a woman's perspective, and the ability to write clearly to produce an indispensable tool for teachers, rabbis, parents, storytellers, and others concerned with transmitting Jewish culture. (*Hadassah Magazine*)

The Classic Tales: 4,000 Years of Jewish Lore by Ellen Frankel is an extraordinary volume spanning three continents and four millennia. The three hundred Jewish tales in this extraordinary volume begin with the creation; in fact, they go back into myth for pre-creation stories and continue down through history. These stories abound in allusions to classic Jewish texts. Biblical cadences, phrases from the prayer book, and ideas from Jewish proverbs and heroic legends resonate in the air. It is, in short, a family memory. (*National Jewish Post And Opinion*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Sanjuanita Mecham:

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