



Adam's Soul: The Collected Tales of Howard Schwartz

Howard Schwartz

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Howard Schwartz, the author of this extraordinary collection of Jewish tales and parables, is one of the most creative, inventive, and inspiring Jewish writers of our generation. When one reads his work, the question arises: what is taken from a primary text and what is invented by the imagination of the author? The answer is a complex one, for as Cynthia Ozick has observed about the writing of Howard Schwartz, 'Each tale is original, yet grow(s) out of the old traditions and tellings.' Ozick adds that Schwartz is 'under the spell of Jewish dream and legend,' pointing to the fact that he is a creative vessel: he has poured the tradition into his soul and then, combining the tradition with his own experience and imagination creates new tales of great depth and profundity. Describing his first encounters with the midrashic literature of the Jewish sages as 'a major turning point' in his life and writing career, Schwartz immersed himself in traditional Jewish literature, including the Bible, the Talmud, and the midrashic collections, as well as kabbalistic and hasidic texts. Schwartz also identifies the writings of Franz Kafka, Jorge Luis Borges, as well as Sufi and Zen parables, as sources of inspiration. As he writes, 'The ancient models served as a living tradition for me,' and he points to the fact that his tales 'emerged out of the impulse to fuse my own imagination with that of traditional Jewish lore.' Adam's Soul: The Collected Tales of Howard Schwartz brings together three collections of the author's writings. The book begins with a remarkable gathering of individual tales described by Schwartz as using the 'midrashic method,' as well as being in the tradition of medieval Jewish folktales, hasidic tales, and the writings of I. L. Peretz, S. Y. Agnon, and I. B. Singer. The second part of the book consists of Schwartz's highly acclaimed collection of stories titled Captive Soul of the Messiah. Based on the life and teachings of the hasidic master Rabbi Nach

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