



# The Woman Who Laughed at God: The Untold History of the Jewish People

*Jonathan Kirsch*

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## **The Woman Who Laughed at God: The Untold History of the Jewish People** Jonathan Kirsch

In *The Woman Who Laughed at God*, bestselling author Jonathan Kirsch takes us on a lively and at times controversial journey through Jewish history that offers answers to the complex and difficult question: "Who is a Jew?" Today, Jewish peoples are divided by differences of faith, practice, and political antagonism. For every accepted tradition in Jewish faith there are countertraditions with their roots going back to ancient times. Kirsch's illuminating work reveals that—even in ancient times—Judaism was never a single faith.

Emblematic of the varieties of Jewish expression is the biblical tale of Sarah, the pious matriarch who laughed at God when He promised her a child in advanced old age. The Torah itself confirms that Judaism has a place even for someone as lighthearted and irreverent as Sarah, and for the many other men and women whose stories are told in *The Woman Who Laughed at God*. We also encounter the Maccabee freedom fighters who closed the Bible and picked up a sword; dervishlike ecstasies who claimed to enjoy direct communication with God even after they had been excommunicated by a distrustful rabbinate; and courageous pioneers for whom a "kosher pig" was any pig fortunate enough to be raised in a kibbutz and slaughtered to feed hungry kibbutzniks. With drama and narrative verve, Kirsch explores the mysticism and magic that have informed a bookish faith.

Jews across the spectrum and anyone who loved Thomas Cahill's *The Gifts of the Jews* will be fascinated and inspired by this celebration of the Jewish faith, rich in untold stories and revelatory interpretations.

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