

the *midrash*, stories about Moses which attempt to fill in the blanks left by the biblical text. She is also somewhat eclectic, bringing in insights from Jewish philosophy, Jewish fiction, and other works.

But what Zornberg's method really does is meld an astute literary reading of the text with psychoanalytic insight. What results is immensely interesting and appealing, at times moving, even to a skeptic of the psychoanalytic worldview. This is likely because when she "evokes the inner world of Moses" she isn't so much psychoanalyzing the man as she is doing a literary analysis of the textual tradition he inhabits, and what, in her view, that suggests about his and our relationship with God and other human beings. One example concerns the relationship between Moses and language. He is sent to redeem the Israelites from Egypt, and is the giver of Israel's Law, making him a communicator of ultimate importance! Yet the text is charged with ambivalence about speaking and failures of communication. Zornberg's analysis of Moses's difficulties point to the ambivalent relationship we have with language itself—and therefore also with our sacred textual traditions.

CHANA THOMPSON SHOR is a Conservative rabbi, the first woman mesader gittin (preparer of Jewish religious divorce), a Judaic fabric artist, and a writer.

Journeying to Jerusalem in Dreams and Reality

When she is just a young girl, Gittel, the heroine of *Trail of Miracles* by Smadar Herzfeld (Amazon Crossing, \$10.77), sets out with her little brother to reach Jerusalem. They walk from their hometown in the Ukraine past rivers, fields, and apple trees, until they are startled by a goose and taken in by kind peasants, who fetch a wagon and send them back home. But the dream of reaching Jerusalem remains with Gittel for several more decades, until ultimately she abandons her two sons after her husband's death and makes that dream a reality.

This novel, which moves back and forth in time, charts another journey too, for Gittel starts out as the daughter of a renowned Torah scholar, and then, overnight, she is taken at the age of 12 by the emissaries of the great Hasidic Maggid, Dov Ber of Mezeritch, a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, to be wed to the Maggid's sickly and reclusive son Avraham. Gittel feels no connection to her husband, though she develops a



strong bond with her father-in-law the Maggid, who understands and at times even intuits her dreams and visions. Much of this novel takes place in a dreamscape and in an imagined reality. Gittel dreams of a gathering of venerable elders who threaten to take her husband's life, and she has visions of the Maggid following the great rebbe's death. Through it all, she dreams of returning to her hometown, where her father taught her to read and write and study Torah. "My saintly father had always derided dreams, calling them drops of burning oil from the cauldron of hell where limbs of the wicked were roasted," Gittel relates. "Of course this saddened me, for I loved my dreams, but I learned to keep them to myself, rolling them around my mind like small, secret marbles, until they became transparent and clear to me."

quoting the sages, that the air makes you wise. Gittel finds companionship about the women of Jerusalem, though these peripheral characters appear only briefly in the novel's opening pages, and then they disappear like a fleeting dream. The reader can't help wishing they lingered a bit longer, so that they might seem more real, but that does not seem to be what the narrator is after: "My words are the words of a dream," Gittel tells us. "They fly like wild bees from place to place, trailing drops of honey, hovering aimlessly in the blue air."

ILANA KURSHAN's memoir, *If All the Seas Were Ink*, has just been published.

lished in Hebrew by 62, a boutique publishing house that Herzfeld founded to publish books on women and religion. Lyrically translated into English by Aloma Halter, this slim volume at times reads more like poetry than prose, with its evocations of the wagons and chicken coops in an 18th-century Ukrainian village and of the pious poverty of the washerwoman that Gittel becomes when she finally reaches Jerusalem, where she declares,

My saintly father had always derided dreams, calling them drops of burning oil from the cauldron of hell where the limbs of the wicked were roasted.

Lilith
has moved!

You can find us here:
119 W. 57th Street
Suite 1210,
New York, NY, 10019

Gittel herself exists in a dream of sorts, since she is at once the daughter-in-law of the Maggid and the great-grandmother of the novel's narrator—the "I" who appears only in the opening and closing chapters, and who describes herself as "an insignificant novelist of whom only a few have heard" living in Jerusalem—as does Smadar Herzfeld. Herzfeld's novel was originally self-pub-