

## Malkah's Notebook: A Journey into the Mystical Aleph-Bet

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Musing through a space that's somewhere between an illuminated, psalmic narrative poem and a graphic novel attuned to the soul, *Malkah's Notebook* is an intimate trip through Jewish mysticism and feminist theology.

Malkah's father spends his days in a dusty room piled high with somber and fascinating texts. It's a place that both intimidates and intrigues Malkah, who elects to ask her father about the meanings behind the Hebrew letters. He welcomes her inquiries, calling her curiosity a blessing. Their discussions initiate an etymological, etiological plunge into wonder that lasts Malkah a lifetime—but whose tensions also sometimes seem to create a gulf between her and those most dear to her.

Pairing poetic lines with lush images depicting Malkah's sometimes lonely pursuit of deeper understanding, this is a text whose lines beg to be lost in—and whose turns only become more lyrical as it progresses. As Malkah learns: there's more to every story than mere words on a page; inflections change meanings, worlds can exist in single letters, and there's so much packed into the white spaces beyond what actually ends up being inscribed.

Throughout the book, Malkah struggles with what to believe—and what to reject—at first assuming that “if one creation story was right, / then all of the others had to be wrong.” Malkah's father is a patient guide who walks her through canon tales and words of wonder, but she still ends up pulling toward her own understandings of her faith and of truth. She is a seeker, a sage, and a wanderer who travels and immerses herself in other traditions; she seeks self-realization in far flung places, digging and “trying to piece together / the fragments of the past.” Hers is a melancholy, sympathetic, and inspiring journey that stands to inspire spiritual inquiries in her audiences, too.

Introducing mystical concepts through the story of a wondering, wandering daughter, *Malkah's Notebook* is a gorgeously illustrated spiritual story.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (March / April 2022)

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