



# JERUSALEM OF GOLD

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*In this book of Jerusalem, stories from various Jewish sources are explored. Settings include the Middle East, Spain, Italy, Greece, and Eastern Europe.*

## JEWISH CONCEPTS

Jerusalem of Gold gives a simple yet beautiful history of the city in its introduction. (The title of the book brings to mind one of the loving names by which the city is known, Yerushalayim shel Zahav.) The capital of Israel, located in the Judean Mountains about an hour's drive east of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem is currently home to more than 700,000 people. The "Old City" is located in the walled eastern section of the city. The Jewish quarter is the location of the Western Wall, the last remaining piece of the Second Temple (destroyed in 70 C.E.).

The stories contained in this book not only provide entertainment but a splendid grounding in the history of Jerusalem and the Jewish people. For centuries Jewish stories, both written and oral, have been a strong connection between Jews, communicating values and traditions from one generation to the next. During periods in history when great distances separated Jewish communities or when the practice of Judaism was forbidden or dangerous, isolation was bridged and anxiety somehow lessened by marvelous stories such as those in Jerusalem of Gold. Populated by kings and princesses, and often including magic in the thrilling adventures, Jewish fairy tales and folk stories continue to ring true and remain a powerful means of transmitting ethics, Jewish history, and, perhaps above all, hope, to our children.

## USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Some children will be able to read these stories for themselves, yet they contain much that will be of interest to adults. Consider reading and discussing these stories together with your youngsters. Additionally, think about reading a favorite story from this book as a family activity on Shabbat. This might develop into a custom in which each week a family member chooses a Jewish story to share after dinner on Friday evening or at a quiet time on Saturday afternoon.

With your children, look through modern picture books about Israel and consider the differences between the ancient and modern city of Jerusalem, as seen in these books and as described in Jerusalem of Gold. Suggest creating a mural in which one side illustrates ancient Jerusalem while the other shows the modern-day city.

Through the Internet or a Jewish songbook or CD, locate Naomi Shemer's song entitled "Jerusalem of Gold," created by her for Israel's National Song Festival in 1967. After playing the song, encourage discussion about the lyrics.

Encourage your children to invent a story similar (or very different!) from one in this book which deals with a subject important to them at the time or create a chapter to insert into one of these stories.