



The Goose Girl, the Rabbi, and the New York Teachers: A Family Memoir

Deborah Heller

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Part history, part memoir, *The Goose Girl, the Rabbi, and the New York Teachers: A Family Memoir* recounts a narrative of lives lived in dramatically changing times. In the background loom author Deborah Heller's distant forebears: a maternal great-great-grandmother, the first Jewish woman in her nineteenth-century German village to refuse to shave her head and wear a wig (sheitel) after marriage, who earned her passage to America by driving geese to market; and a seventeenth-century Talmudic scholar, successively chief rabbi of Vienna, Prague, and Cracow, who wrote an important commentary on the Mishnah and was arrested and imprisoned by the imperial authorities. Echoes of the rebellious Goose Girl and the scholarly rabbi reverberate in the lives of Heller's parents, born at the beginning of the twentieth century - her mother in Brooklyn, her father in a Russian shtetl. Emerging from very different worlds, they came together as New York schoolteachers, sharing the radical hopes and fears of a generation marked by strong political passions. Drawing on written and oral history, legal records, and her own memories, Heller follows her parents from their early years through the McCarthy years and beyond. Focusing both on individuals and on the worlds in which they lived, *The Goose Girl, the Rabbi, and the New York Teachers* illuminates significant moments in Jewish and American history.

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