

The Spice of the Sabbath

Howard Schwartz

Despite what you may have heard,
Abraham and Sarah never died.
They were rewarded with eternal life
in the Garden of Eden —
they've lived there
ever since they took leave of this world.

During the week
Abraham wanders in the garden,
gathering dry leaves in a basket.
On the eve of the Sabbath,
Sarah crushes those leaves
and casts their powder into the winds.

Then the winds,
guided by angels,
carry it to the four corners of the earth,
so that all those who breathe in
even the smallest speck,
have a taste of paradise.

HOWARD SCHWARTZ is the author of five books of poems, *Vessels*, *Gathering the Sparks*, *Sleepwalking Beneath the Stars*, *Breathing in the Dark*, and *The Library of Dreams: New and Selected Poems, 1965-2013*, from which these poems are excerpted. He is also the co-editor (with Anthony Rudolf) of *Voices Within the Ark: The Modern Jewish Poets*. His other books include *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism*, which won the *National Jewish Book Award* in 2005, and *Leaves from the Garden of Eden: One Hundred Classic Jewish Tales*, published in 2008.

Genealogy

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In the beginning I was a swirl of dust
carried by cosmic winds.
I couldn't hear the silence.
I couldn't see the stars circling around me.
I was entirely turned within,
focused on a holy spark,
a cosmic seed waiting to be sown
in a palace of its own creation.

It took a long time
before my eyes opened.
Who knows how long?
By then the holy seed had taken root
inside me,
giving me the blessing of breath,
and guiding me
out of darkness
as I crawled into the unknown.

I learned how the river lifts with rain,
and how to draw my breath back and forth
through countless stars.
I can still recall
all the prior worlds I passed through
to reach this instant, alive.
Even now a vibrating reed of breath
shelters me in a house of song.