

The Neverending Story

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

In *The Arabian Nights*, Scheherazade keeps herself alive by weaving a narrative spell: her story is so thrilling that the Sultan keeps her around to hear the next night's continuation.

Staying alive through stories: this is part of the secret of the Jewish people. We tell our tales, day by day, night after night. On Tisha B'av we recount the story of destruction and loss. On Passover, of liberation and triumph. On Rosh Hashana of creation, on Shabbat of rest. Scholars, sages, fiddlers, fools — each magic link in the chain pulls us to the next.

Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav said that most people tell stories to put others to sleep, but his stories were to wake people up. The Jewish people tell stories to rouse our souls to wonder, to devotion and to goodness. In every land, through countless languages, we carried our chronicles and fables.

The stories grew more elaborate with each retelling. Generations added each its tears and triumphs — and of course its laughter — and handed on to the future. Here is the bright wonder: We do not only tell the story. We also become part of the story that will be told.