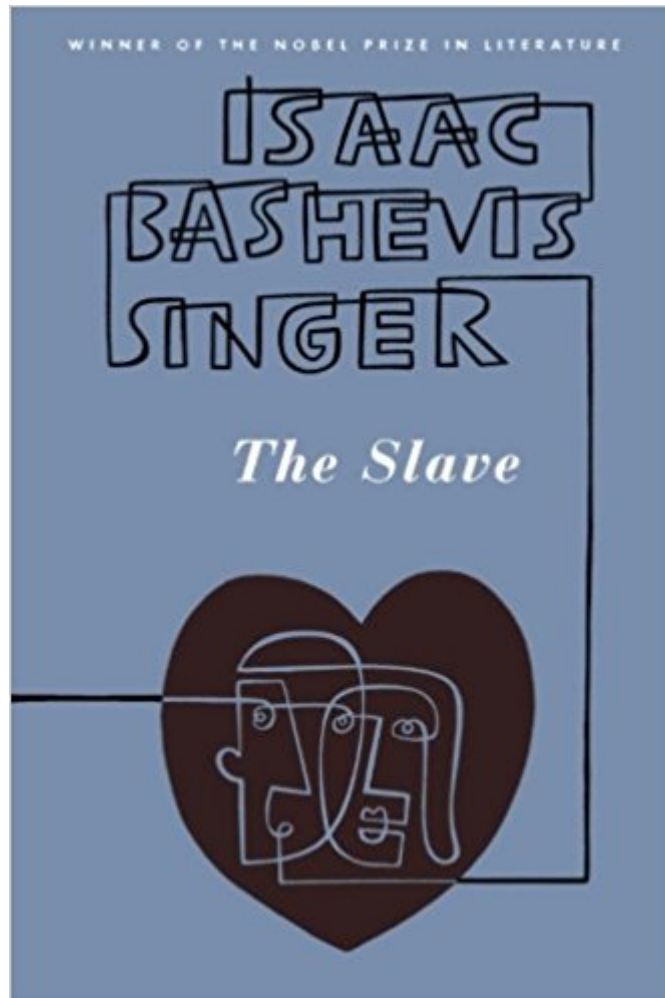




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The Slave



Synopsis

Four years after the Chmielnicki massacres of the seventeenth century, Jacob, a slave and cowherd in a Polish village high in the mountains, falls in love with Wanda, his master's daughter. Even after he is ransomed, he finds he can't live without her, and the two escape together to a distant Jewish community. Racked by his consciousness of sin in taking a Gentile wife and by the difficulties of concealing her identity, Jacob nonetheless stands firm as the violence of the era threatens to destroy the ill-fated couple.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“The Slave is a burningly radiant, intensely beautiful book. Singer is answering his age like a prophet.”
—Ted Hughes, *The New York Review of Books*
“A peerless storyteller, Singer restores the sheer enchantment with story, with outcome, with what-happens-next that has been denied most readers since their adolescence. There is about him a bardic quality that gives *The Slave* the strength and authority of a timeless folktale.”
—David Boroff, *Saturday Review*

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Yiddish

As a result of the Chmielnicki massacres in 1648, thousands of Jews lost their lives, among them was the family of the Jacob, who was taken as a slave later to be sold to Polish peasants. Up there,

in the mountains, he is treated by everyone as subhuman, except by one Polish peasant - Wanda. Naturally, they fall in love. After fellow Jews from his hometown pay the ransom and free Jacob, he tries to live a normal life in his hometown, yet he cannot forget Wanda. So he decides to go to Poland and bring Wanda back with him. Since it was illegal at the time and punishable by death to convert a Christian to Judaism, he decides to pass her as a mute until she masters the Yiddish language, so her Polish accent won't reveal her. Although thought to be a Jew, Wanda is mistreated by the community. Wanda, as a non-Jew living among Jews, is able to examine the Jewish community through a different set of eyes. Assumed to be mute, people feel free to talk in her presence. Fairly quickly, as Wanda herself is taught about Judaism by Jacob, she notices the hypocrisy, the decay and the lack of religious discipline within her community. Before Wanda dies in childbirth, she reveals the secret of her Christian birth. This leads to Jacob running away in fear of his life, leaving his son to be taken care of by people in the community. To cut a story short, Jacob returns to take his son to Israel. This is a very powerful story about a relationship between two people from different cultures and religions at a time when there was no tolerance for the other. It also a deep examination of the good and bad of religion.

No one can bring characters to life, and scenes to the immediate like IB Singer. This is a passionate, beautiful love story set during the 16th century in Poland, amid ignorance, violence, and a Poland transitioning from medieval mindsets. The courage and strength of the main characters, Jacob and the converted pagan, Sarah, is inspirational. Their love and devotion is palpable, and the historical context is absolutely fascinating. A great, unforgettable read. It is what I call READABLE LITERATURE.

This is a wonderful little known book by Singer but I think it his best. This is the third copy I've bought because when I loaned it out, the people think it is as wonderful as I do and never gave it back. Love in the midst of bigotry, ignorance and war that lasts the test to time is wonderful!

A magnificent book

If anyone likes to get submersed in a book, this is one that will do it for you. The village and the people come alive while reading this. Descriptive and historically informative...great human plot. I have read this book several times over the years and love it more every time I read it. A CLASSIC!!!

Well written, masterpiece. I'm glad I found this book. I enjoyed reading it.

Great love story with suspense and danger! You don't have to be Jewish to understand it, Isaac Singer explains most of the concepts.

Singer's novel is true work of art. It is one of those tales that reaches into the heart of the reader and has you experience all the love, the rage, the pain the characters go through. Highly recommend.

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