

# UNTOLD STORIES: THE BAAL SHEM TONES



"Sometimes you start with just an idea of where you want to go, and before you know it a song has created itself." - Helene Kates

*Untold Stories* is the second album from husband and wife songwriting team Michael and Helene Kates, a.k.a. The Baal Shem Tones. Released on independent label Peradam Productions, this CD is a must-have for any music connoisseur.

The CD opens with "Hineini (Here I Am)," a powerful statement of personal connection to G-d. "It's about my own journey," says Helene. "Sometimes my path seems clear, other times I feel totally lost. But there's always a road back home, a connection waiting to be made. When I'm ready to hear, I hear."

"Into the Light," written by Michael, is rooted in Chassidic teaching. "When I heard the song, I fell in love with it," says Helene, and indeed she delivers one of the most heartfelt vocals on the CD. Stellar mixes from Grammy winner Ben Wisch make this tiny dynamo sound bigger than life on every track.

Helene is the only vocalist on most tracks, layering lush harmonies over powerful melodic delivery. The

exception is "Oh Shabbos Come In," an *acappella* street corner quartet in which Michael sings all four parts. This simple yet multi-faceted song is an utterly infectious sing-along before candle lighting.

"Whispers of Shema" is an ambient blend of melody and meaning that truly lends itself to the spirit of the listener. "It was an improvisation following a meditation," says Helene.

"As Michael played, I heard

slow strings of words that floated together and became the song. To me it represents the deepest level of hearing, an organic understanding and oneness."

With *Untold Stories*, Michael has become a personal favorite songwriter and producer. Combined with the talents of some of Nashville's finest session players, he and Wisch made this album of 12 songs a sheer pleasure to hear all the way through, again and again. Kickin', up-tempo rockers, sweet and simple folk melodies interwoven with Hebrew and English lyrics, and wordless *nigunim* that speak straight to the soul are held together by a common thread of wonderful sound, creating a whole from different chapters.

-Marcy Levinson-Brooks | atlantajewishnews.com.  
Reprinted with permission.

For more information visit [www.baalshemtones.com](http://www.baalshemtones.com)